

DREW SERMONS
ON THE
GOLDEN TEXTS
FOR 1909

EDITED BY
EZRA SQUIER TIPPLE, D.D.
PROFESSOR OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY
DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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PREFACE

The reception given to the first volume of Drew Sermons on the Golden Texts of the International Sunday School Lessons was cordial. The book was unique in Sunday school literature, and the interest in it was gratifyingly widespread. Sunday school workers of all denominations found the short sermons, which were not intended to be expositions of the lessons, but rather brief dissertations on the Golden Texts, helpful, and have very heartily commended the undertaking. The Editor hopes that this new volume will be found equally suggestive. The writers of the sermons are professors and former students of Drew Theological Seminary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, who with the hundreds of other students of this honored institution are deeply interested in the spiritual well-being and religious training of the children and youth of this land and all lands.

As so many of the lessons of this coming year have to do with the various missionary journeys of the great missionary Paul, his labors, his trials, and his successes, special attention is directed to the numerous contributions to the volume by some of the many graduates of Drew Theological Seminary who have heard the call of the "uttermost parts of the earth," and are laboring in difficult foreign fields with distinguished success.

Madison, New Jersey, *September, 1908.*

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LESSON FOR JANUARY 3

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

GOLDEN TEXT: "It came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—Luke 24. 51.

BY CHARLES F. SITTERLY, PH.D., S.T.D.

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE AND EXEGESIS OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE, DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MADISON, NEW JERSEY

SAINT LUKE has the true instinct of the historian. He alone of all the gospel writers gives the complete program of Christ's earthly career, including both the incarnation and the ascension as well as all that lay between them. And he rightly begins the Acts of the Apostles with that transcendent fact which closes his gospel. The ascent of the King Eternal must precede the descent of the Eternal Spirit.

It is pleasant to observe how the so-called independent churches are gradually returning to the due and proper observance of the well-established festivals of the ancient Christian year; but Christmas and Easter must always be followed by Ascension and Pentecost, and we await in hope the day when these shall also receive world-wide celebration.

The phrase "It came to pass" may also be said to be characteristic of Saint Luke. Of course, it is an expression peculiar to narrators, being scarcely found at all in the Pauline or other epistles, but it is interesting to find that Luke employs it at least ten times as often as does Matthew or Mark, and that John uses it in this connection not at all. Close literary critics have not failed to observe the significance of its frequency in both the third Gospel and book of Acts as bearing favorably on their kinship in source if not authorship.

One can hardly fail to feel the deep pathos under-

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lying the statement that “while he blessed them, he was parted from them,” but it was doubtless wholly outside of the writer’s intention. Like juxtaposition of laughter with tears, of pain with pleasure, of saving others while losing self, of breaking the bread of friendship for the open hand of the betrayer, was the common experience of Christ as of many of his followers; but to say farewell forever when the moment has at length arrived for both giving and receiving closest confidences passes understanding. Why the only son is parted from his widowed mother just as he is beginning to bless her, or why the darling daughter is taken up into heaven just when her life on earth seems fullest of promise and of fruition, receives reply in a study of our Lord’s ascension.

The ascension of Christ from earth to heaven involves consequences of the highest order both to himself and to all mankind. From the time of his first formal declaration to the masters of Israel that in his person should be fulfilled the symbol of the ladder set up between heaven and earth, on which Jehovah’s messengers should ascend and descend, until that last like assertion in the court of Caiaphas that he should hereafter be seen sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven, Christ had consistently claimed co-deity and co-lordship with God himself, and even his resurrection was not a sufficient vindication of this claim, though of course it was a most manifest element in such vindication. However, it was not without great significance that he restrained the enraptured Mary in the garden with the word, “Detain me not; for I am not yet ascended to the Father.” Although he had apparently accepted the vinegar about the ninth hour for the purpose of clearing his throat, so that the universe might hear and give heed to the word, “It is finished,” still we now see that not all was yet finished. To be sure, the lowest depth of humiliation was at that hour sounded when “he became obedient even unto

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death, and that death by a cross"; but the inspired Paul rightly and without pause exclaims, "wherefore God also hath highly exalted him." As another, equally gifted, exclaims, "Though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we already see Jesus crowned with glory and honor." Thus the necessary and immediate sequence of his humiliation is by all reason and revelation declared to be his ascension to where he had been before the world was. Captive once and for a little while, he rises captor once and forever and leads captivity captive; and as he exclaimed to John on Patmos, "Behold, I am he who was dead, but I am alive again, and I have brought back from my prison house the keys both of death and of hades." And thus no creed is complete nor anthem nor apocalypse finished that does not declare, "He ascended to the right hand of God," "He hath gone up on high," "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." The mystery of redemption and the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God may truly be conceded to be past finding out, but when we consider, even in our limited way, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, we begin to comprehend how he could endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, who for the joy that was set before him in his predestined exaltation endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. We see, then, that the ascension of Christ restores again the society of the heavenly court, and the Son, having glorified the Father on the earth, having fully finished the work he had been given to do, of right receives the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

But for us men the ascension of our Lord means far more than we can now or ever realize or write down.

In the first place, it completes the foundation for the Christian faith.

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As to the Godhead, it fills up whatever was lacking that men might know that the heart and personality of the Father were supremely satisfied with nothing short either of the restoration of the glory of the Son in whom he had ever been well pleased or of the redemption of sinful men for whose sake he had sacrificed the Son upon the cross. For the Second Person of the Godhead it meant, as we have already seen, the necessary vindication that the world might know that the Lamb had laid down his life of himself, and that he had the power both to lay it down of himself and to take it again. In respect of the Holy Ghost, Christ's ascension was the inevitable and long-promised precedent of the Spirit's forthcoming; and John is entirely right when he says that prior to that event the Holy Ghost was not yet given, for the Son was not yet glorified, and Jesus himself had also plainly declared that it was expedient that he return to the Father's house in order that the other and last Advocate be sent forth in the joint name of both the Father and the Son, even the Spirit of truth, who might abide forever.

In this threefold and final manifestation of the Trinity the devout disciple finds ample and adequate prophecy and pledge that every lesser and legitimate need shall be abundantly satisfied. As Christ's sacrifice had brought life, so his ascension brings immortality to light. In his last will and testament the Master declared in ever-memorable words, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Thus due recognition is paid to one of the most urgent and universal cravings of the human heart, and the limitless regions of hope are opened up, and even the daring claim is set soberly down that since the Father hath bestowed such manner of love upon us we know that when his Son becomes again manifested we shall be like him. We see, then, that there is nothing which the believing disciple may not venture to hope shall become his through

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the abounding grace of his God. One of the very practical benefits which our Lord's ascension brings us is the plain proof it affords of his superiority to all earthly conditions and laws. Though like endings came to crown the testimony of Enoch and Elijah, yet they fall short of the apotheosis of Christ both in themselves and in their value as standards of possibility for us. His ascension and the manner of it was clearly set forth as a type for the aspiration of all Christians. In like manner he shall come again and in like manner we too shall ascend and be ever with the Lord. Much and perhaps most of the widespread confusion in men's minds concerning the heavenly life arises from their slowness to perceive even the most obvious facts which characterized the body of Christ after his victory over the grave. His resurrection itself is sufficient proof that death had no more dominion over him, and the manifest mystery as to the nature and range of his movements during the forty days shows that he was no longer subject to the bonds which limit other men, but that here too he ranged at will as king. How sublimely natural, then, his last departure seems, how in character with that unique series of post-resurrection events for which it serves as the fitting and only adequate climax. He might appear to different individuals or groups of friends in different places and times and circumstances through a period of weeks, until six or seven hundred souls were convinced of his personal identity yet bodily modification, and had come to accept the actual yet changed categories as peculiarly appropriate and normal to their Lord, but he could only ascend once, he could only go away once. From one particular spot, on one particular day, in the presence of one particular group of witnesses, under conditions the like of which had never before and could never again arise, he must ascend, and so he did. Now, it is clear that just as the personality who had passed through the valley of the shadow of

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death and returned unto life was the same and yet the bodily vesture had been modified, so in this last earthly experience of the Saviour if he were to ascend high above the earth, even into heaven itself, his earthly body must be still more modified, yea, transformed until it became like to that which is heavenly, and thus that body which rose is not that body which shall descend again but has long since and even from the day of its rising become the body of his glory; and although he shall descend in like manner as he ascended, yet the body with which he shall be clothed shall be somehow, somewhat, other than that which walked the holy hills on ascension day, and the hands, those blessed hands, still bearing the print of the nails, shall be the same in essence though glorified in form, and thus even more truly the same hands which he lifted in blessing upon them and as he blessed was parted from them.

To us, therefore, as well as to the dull questioners in Corinth Saint Paul speaks if we curiously and half-doubtfully ask, "With what body do they come?" "Thou foolish one, that body which is, is not that body which shall be. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." And it is the body of this last sort which enswathed the Saviour as he pierced the skies and therefore becomes the pattern of all who shall finally ascend with him on high.

LESSON FOR JANUARY 10

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

GOLDEN TEXT: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth."—John 14. 16, 17.

BY FRED CLARE BALDWIN, D.D.

PASTOR CALVARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
EAST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

I. THIS text does not within itself set forth the whole content of the pentecostal expectation. It is one of a group of similar promises, to which it may be said to hold the same relation as does the center to every other fact and feature of a circle. In John 16. 8, for example, we read, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." In this promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit there is emphasized his work of awakening the moral consciousness of the world. The Divine Spirit works in the moral natures of men directly, or immediately, and also through intervening agencies. And among the latter, what, we may ask, is more potent for moral awakening than the spectacle and influence of a life and character actually controlled by the Spirit of God? On the lips of such a life, and from whatever sort of pulpit, the preaching of the truth has double sway. Here we see the intimacy of relation that exists between this promise and the Golden Text.

The last words that our Saviour addressed to his disciples before his ascension were a promise of the descent of the Holy Spirit: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1. 8). It is not irreverence to say that the emphatic word in this particular promise is "power." For this the disciples were to wait and pray rather than for any amount of knowledge concerning times

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and seasons, epochs and dispensations. We notice also that it was a very practical form of power they were to receive, enabling them to witness for the truth in ever-widening spheres of influence—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost part of the earth. It was to be the splendid power of an aroused and consecrated personality divinely reinforced. In the pentecostal promise selected for the Golden Text these are the facts which are emphasized:

1. *The personality of the Holy Spirit.* In our translation he is called the Comforter. Literally, a comforter is one who makes another brave through comradeship. The Greek derivative “Paraclete” is even more suggestive—one called to the side of another. For all this nothing in the name of force, or law, or nature, is adequate—not though we spell these words with capitals. Where a comforter is, there must be mind and heart and some power to help.

2. *The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.* The careless and impenitent soul is not to presume upon anything this promise may seem to suggest to him. Spiritual atrophy is one of the surest possibilities of the soul. And if a soul persists in such a suicidal process what can the Spirit of God do? It is to be doubted whether any amount of sunlight would ever be able to restore vision to the atrophied of the fishes. For such as have received the Holy Spirit this feature of our pentecostal promise was doubtless intended, among other things, to allay the doubts and fears incident to those temporary obscurations of the divine presence arising out of our own changing moods and mental states. In the sincere life the Comforter is always and equally present. Whether we grip this truth by faith in the midnight storm, or whether we read it from the mirrors of a Christian consciousness at high noon, the value of the promise remains the same.

But this promise of the abiding presence of the Divine Spirit has more than an individual application.

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It looks beyond the day of Pentecost into the Christian centuries; into the long career of the Christian Church; into a Christian civilization with its ever-deepening, ever-expanding sense of what is right and just and true in the name of Christ! The outpouring of the Spirit did not cease with the disappearance of what may be termed the miraculous phenomena of that first wonderful day. Nor did it cease with the completion of the inspired writings. Nor was it wholly neutralized by the defections of the church in what we rightfully call the dark ages. Nor has it ever ceased. In the very wake of English deism and French atheism came the most wonderful century for wide-reaching movements in the name of Christian conquest that the world has known since apostolic times. Was not that an outpouring of the same Spirit? And what shall we say of these very times in which we live? Whence came this new doctrine of the solidarity of the human race which underlies all our splendid progress toward the ultimate removal of artificial barriers between men and the bringing of the whole earth into a community of nations? It is as old as Pentecost! Not to physiology, nor psychology, nor anthropology do we owe our progress toward a perfect recognition of the claims of human brotherhood, except as these fields of study have been brooded over by that same Spirit who some two thousand years ago empowered a few humble men at Jerusalem to speak their flaming message in the mother tongue of nations!

3. *A distinctive cognomen—the Spirit of truth.* In still another connection it was said (John 16. 13), “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” This was to be done by the quickening of their memories to recall the essential teachings of the Master, the strengthening of their power of insight to rightly interpret his truths, and the balancing of their judgment to keep all truths in a proper perspective. There is nothing more direfully needed in

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this great day of material conquest and splendor than a revival of spiritual insight. But then again, there is no phrase current in the speech of men that needs to be more carefully guarded. Spiritual insight—what is it? It is more than mysticism. It is infinitely more than cant. It has no index in the juggling speech of any form of occultism. It is that quality of soul which enables its possessor to sift the true from the false on the basis of the mind's own integrity. It is devout sanity. It is the restored ability to look beneath, above, beyond all material considerations, when spiritual and eternal interests are at stake. It is the power to discern between what is primary and what is but secondary in the pursuit of truth.

II. After the disciples had tarried ten days at Jerusalem, according to the command, a wonderful event took place. The account of it is given in the second chapter of Acts with a grandeur of simplicity which would place its author in the first rank of genius, in absence of any claim to inspiration. There can be no question that it marked a specific fulfillment of the promises to which we have so freely referred. This event was accompanied with two distinct physical phenomena, one appealing to the sense of sight, the other to the sense of sound. These were not repeated, so far as we are aware, in any subsequent case of the Spirit's descent upon New Testament believers. But a larger wonder accompanied the great fulfillment, one that baffles completely every attempt at explanation. We refer to the gift of tongues. "The disciples began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance," and men who were gathered in Jerusalem from all quarters of the earth heard and understood the message of the hour—and each through the medium of his native tongue. Thousands yielded to the truth and became faithful followers of the risen Christ.

The simple question to be raised at this point is, were these miraculous proceedings the measure of that

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power which our Lord had promised his disciples? Did Pentecost fulfill its mission toward the disciples in this overwhelming display of spiritual force, or in something deeper and more hidden? Was their greatest gift the gift of tongues? What did they receive that any honestly seeking soul may still hope to receive? And what took place that day that waits to repeat itself in the life of any church or worshiping people?

If we compare the subsequent lives of the men with what we know them to have been before that eventful day we find in them—

1. *A vastly increased measure of personal stability.* How they all forsook their Lord in the gathering darkness of the crucifixion; how Peter flatly denied him; how Thomas was filled with doubt and Philip with incredulity—all these are matters of familiar knowledge. But after Pentecost what a change do we behold! Still consciously dependent upon divine aid, how trustful toward that aid have they become—and how nobly self-reliant withal! The old hesitating, vacillating, doubting, and fearful spirit gone as the shadows of the night! Never again does Peter deny the Lord. Never do they doubt. Never do they forsake the cross wherever it leads. When the Saviour was among them visibly they forsook him and fled; now, no storm of persecution, no marshaled host of Rome, no infuriated Jewish mob, no prospect of martyrdom could swerve them from their loyalty to *an invisible Lord!* Whence this change? Whence this increased moral stamina? Whence this mighty reinforcement of the will? In comparison with this alone the gift of miracle-working pales into insignificance.

2. *A keener spiritual insight and a broader scope of vision.* How slow had been the best of them to perceive the real import of the Lord's words while he was among them. They clamored for the continued visible presence of the Christ. They clamored for an earthly kingdom with Christ at its head. After his

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resurrection, on the eve of the Lord's ascension, we find their material conceptions of things still clinging to their minds. Much that he had said to them seemed an apparent waste of words. They had not caught the deeper meaning of his words nor seen the essential beauty of his life. But now the spiritual meaning of his word is the food of their lives, and the regal splendor of his life fills all the heavens of their thinking! The horizon of their vision also has broadened and is broadening. If they need tutelage in this respect, they yield to it, and the process goes on. Whence all this change? Whence this awakening to know their Lord and the character of the kingdom they were to build up in his name? Better is it to answer this answerable question than to seek an explanation of the cloven tongues of fire or to search for mystic meanings in the gift of tongues.

3. *An absolute change of motive.* Listen! "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matt. 18. 1.) And again, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matt. 20. 21). (The sons were with their mother when she made this plea!) After Pentecost, when, where, or on what occasion is such a motive seen to lift its head or make itself heard? Self-sacrificing service was the one sweet and masterful motive that flooded their thoughts and impelled their action. So far as reward is concerned, if we may trust tradition, every one of the men who figured prominently in the church of Pentecost went to heaven through the gateway of martyrdom.

These men were a success, if we may stop to pay tribute to a twentieth-century standard. Their lives went as so many mammoth foundations into the structure of the church. Their monument is Christianity. What made them great is an open secret. They drank at a fountain of wisdom and strength which has never since been sealed!

LESSON FOR JANUARY 17

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

GOLDEN TEXT: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."—Acts 2. 42.

BY JOHN ALFRED FAULKNER, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF HISTORICAL THEOLOGY, DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
MADISON, NEW JERSEY

HERE are the notes of a true Christian church:
1. The apostolic faith. 2. Fellowship with the apostles and with each other. 3. The fraternity or eucharistic meal. 4. Prayer.

First, then, what was the apostolic teaching? We must not import latter developments back into that infant time, but if we take a careful look into the doctrines which lay back of the first Christian sermon (verses 14-36) I think we shall have a fairly stanch doctrinal vertebral column.

1. The inspiration of the Old Testament (verses 16, 25, etc.). This is assumed throughout. In fact, this is one of the characteristic features of the whole apostolic proclamation, the Word of God in the Old Testament. The present tendency in some circles to minify the importance of the Old Testament revelation is absolutely contradictory to the apostolic consciousness.

2. The presence of Christ in the Old Testament (verses 25ff., 34). My friend, Dr. of Phil. (Leipz.) George C. Workman, recently professor in the Wesleyan Theological College, Montreal, contends that there are no direct prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament, but wonderfully clear and cogent indirect prophecies, that is, passages which had their historical interpretation in the events of contemporary or later history, but which in their secondary or spiritual interpretation fit Christ as by inspired co-intention—in fact,

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truly find their highest fulfillment in him.¹ Whether this is the true exegesis of the Messianic passages of the Old Testament, I must turn over to my scholarly colleague, Professor Rogers. But it is evident that the simple-minded apostles had not worked out such a far-fetched (as it would have appeared to them) philosophic hypothesis. They cut that Gordian knot in a truly Alexander style. "David saith concerning him," that is, Christ (verse 25). David "foreseeing this, spake of the resurrection of Christ" (verse 31). The truly Messianic character of the Old Testament as completely fulfilled in the actual Jesus was one element of the apostolic teaching.

3. The Trinity. I do not say that the apostles had at this time the full doctrine of the Trinity as later elaborated, but they had the beginnings of it, the elements of it. The substantial equality of Jesus with God and the oneness of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Godhead are distinctly set forth in verses 33, 36, 38. I have not space to enlarge upon this, but the reader will notice that Christ and the Spirit are spoken of in the sermon in connection with God and the work of salvation in a way which would be blasphemy if they were not absolutely divine.

4. The literal resurrection of Jesus. I was much interested in reading in preparation for this sermon Professor Pfeiderer's clever waving away as later legends the stories about the appearance of the angels to the women, the empty grave, the bodily resurrection. All this is simply a *Sage*, he says, spun out of whole cloth; in fact, there are very grave doubts whether Jesus was ever solemnly buried at all!² What a pity the apostles were not born late enough to be instructed as to the facts of Christ's life and death and resurrection by the semi-infidel professors of Germany, like

¹ See his *Messianic Prophecy*, Toronto, 1899, and especially his great book on the Servant Passages of Isaiah, published by Longmans in 1906.

² *Das Urchristentum: seine Schriften und Lehren*, 2 Aufl., Berl., 1902, i, 2-4.

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Pfleiderer, whom I once heard lecture on the Passion history in Matthew to his few students in Berlin with the coldness and deadness of a mathematical professor going over a question in quadratics, with apparently not the slightest spiritual appreciation of that awful tragedy. But whether the actual resurrection of Jesus was a fiction or not, the apostles believed it (verse 31). The ghost theory of the resurrection of Jesus now believed by all "advanced" men would have had no transforming power (see the effect in Matt. 14. 26).

5. Repentance the gate of salvation. "What shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye" (verses 37, 38). Of course, faith is included—"then they that received his word" (verse 41; see also 3. 16). It implies also a doctrine of sin and damnation. There must be something to be saved from.

6. Baptism the external means of salvation, this baptism being given only to those who repent and believe (verses 38-41). Baptism has not the sin-cleansing office assigned to it in Catholicism, nor is it the unimportant thing assumed in Quakerism. It is the public and official putting on of Christ, following an actual rejection of sin and inner preparation of soul.

These are the doctrinal contents of that first apostolic proclamation—the "apostles' teaching" in which the first church "continued steadfastly." If we take the speech delivered perhaps the next day or very soon after by this same Peter, we have the additional points: 7. Jesus Christ is the "author (*ἀρχής*) of life" (3 15), the fountain of Messianic salvation. 8. The eternal atonement (3. 18). 9. The Second Coming of Christ (3. 21). 10. The restoration of all things in him. If anyone thinks that the first church had no definite doctrinal structure, and that therefore the church to-day can get along very well by imitating the apostles' love but by paying no special attention to their teaching, he is in my judgment fatally mistaken. And by this tenfold doctrinal testimony of that earliest

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teaching we can judge the numerous churches which have invoked Christ's name since that day. Take, for instance, Christian Science, so called: it evaporates every layer of this doctrinal deposit into a hazy idealism which means anything or nothing, but which starts by denying the fundamental realities which the apostles affirmed—the reality of flesh, of sin, of death, of salvation in Christ alone.

The second note of the true Christian church is fellowship (*κοινωνία*), that is, mutual brotherly association with each other. Every kindly intended society is not a church, but every church to be Christian must continue in the fellowship as well as in the doctrine. It must be democracy, a society of mutual rights and obligations, where all are on an equal footing of love and respect, where the needs of the poorest are looked after by oneness in Christ. Church history often shows much jealousy for the apostles' doctrine, or somebody else's doctrine, but not as much for the fellowship. In fact, the fellowship has often been crucified in zeal for the doctrine. How to maintain the one without denying in act or heart the other—ah, that is the question! The other day the Ministerial Union of Hackensack refused admission to a Unitarian pastor. That was certainly zeal for the apostles' teaching, for if carried to its ultimate issue Unitarianism annihilates nearly every one of the above ten teachings. But does the above action deny fellowship? I suppose all would agree that fellowship can exist only where people are bound together by certain principles held in common ("Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" Amos 3. 3). The only question is the principles. Shall it be agreement on the maximum or minimum? Let us say, On the minimum. Well, does the last residuum of Christianity include the deity of its Founder? It does (Acts 2. 33). So there you are, and the Unitarian brother is not in the ministers' meeting at Hackensack. It is one thing if Christianity is a

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beautiful ethical religion, founded by the dreamy enthusiast who was the offspring of the premature passion of a peasant, and it is an absolutely different thing if Christianity is the religion of redemption administered by the Eternal Son of God, who has received from the Father the promise of the Spirit, whom he (Jesus) pours forth. East and west are twin brothers locked in eternal embrace by the side of the distance which separates the Unitarian and Trinitarian conceptions of Christianity.

Does the fellowship include any particular social program? I have deep sympathy with socialism, and I desire ardently to see an extension of the people's or government's ownership. If the state attends to my letter, why should it not look after my package? But it is evident that the Christian fellowship, while it is consistent with socialism, is also consistent with any other theory of society which is not itself unjust or immoral. There was a voluntary communism in Jerusalem for a time (Acts 4. 32-35), but nowhere else. And there were Christians outside of Jerusalem. Remember this: a society of Christians may be as orthodox as the angel Gabriel, but unless it is a living realization of brotherhood it is no Christian church.

A third note of the true Christian church is the continuing in the breaking of bread. There is a dispute among Bible scholars whether this refers to those first Christians as having only their evening meals together, or whether the expression means the daily or weekly Eucharists or Lord's Suppers. I believe with Meyer that it refers to both. Modern research has dissipated the old view that the love feast or common meal of the Christians was separated by a hard and fast line from the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist. So far as we know, such a separation never took place in the apostolic church, nor for some time afterward. Ignatius about A. D. 110-117 still uses Love Feast and Eucharist promiscuously for the common meal of the Chris-

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tians.¹ Every such meal was a Eucharist, and every Eucharist was a common meal. The ceremonial Lord's Supper, as we know it, was a later development, necessary perhaps, but still nonapostolic. But either by a common meal or by a ceremonial shadow of a meal every Christian society ought to mark its oneness with the apostolic church. The breaking of bread is one of the indispensable notes of the true church, or any church which seeks to show fidelity to the spirit and forms of apostolic Christianity. Difference of view there will always be as to the doctrinal meaning of that Eucharistic meal, but the meal itself will be observed faithfully by all those who desire, with the first believers, to continue in the apostle's doctrine, the fellowship, and the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

And this leads me to say that a fourth note in a true Christian church is prayer. Notice the word in the Revised Version, "the prayers," definite prayers said at the apostolic gatherings, which, as Meyer well says, were partly new Christian prayers restricted to no formula, partly psalms and the usual Jewish prayers, especially having reference to the Messiah and his kingdom. Distributing bread can never take the place of prayer. There is a subtle temptation nowadays to make much of "practical" Christianity, of running to and fro, of conventions and committees, of societies and settlements, and all this is well. But more important is the open vision, the door that swings outward into the eternities, the power that comes from above. Woe to that church which does much but prays little. From that fresh morning-glory of our organized Christian faith comes this eternal lesson to the church, that she can only be true to her Founder when she like those first Christians continues steadfast in the apostles' teaching, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.

¹ Compare the remarks of Drews in the *Herzog-Hauck Realencyk.*, 3 Aufl., v, 562 (1898).

LESSON FOR JANUARY 24

THE LAME MAN HEALED

GOLDEN TEXT: "His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know."—Acts 3. 16.

BY P. M. BUCK, D.D.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT MEERUT DISTRICT, NORTH INDIA
CONFERENCE, MEERUT, INDIA

THE subject of this lesson was chosen to make manifest the power and glory of Christ by receiving soundness of body after forty years of abject helplessness. His deliverance is peculiarly illustrative of divine tenderness, which however equally obtains in all Christ's dealings with believing, praying souls. He cannot contradict himself in his varied activities. The chiefest value to us of this brief biographical sketch lies in the fact that we may use it as a parable setting forth a common experience in the spiritual realm. As a parable it strikingly illustrates several great facts and principles. The following points in the history of this poor cripple are full of instruction :

I. *His Helplessness.* Regarding this experience two facts are worthy of attention :

1. It was from his birth. With the first dawn of consciousness he found himself wanting in ability to engage in life's activities. His helplessness continued through the long period of forty years. The mystery of it all he could not understand. The fact he could but know. As regards normal activities in the spiritual realm a like experience is universal. Physical birth under favorable conditions brings an organization of body and mind that with possible care and training will by a natural process develop into the full strength of manhood. The provisions of nature suffice to make the earthly side of life a success. Were man a mere crea-

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ture of the dust no higher need would exist. But man's real and satisfying life is in a far higher realm. In his higher nature he is a spirit and his home is with and in God. In the infant are found the powers fundamental to the possibility of the saintliness and moral perfection that fit for divine fellowship. But these powers are wanting in the vitality and strength that can enable them by natural processes to reach their goal. Nay, further, there is in these wondrous powers such a bent toward evil, such a moral twist, that left to themselves amid natural environments their course of action will surely be the ways of sin. Without divine interposition the intellect cannot rise to real and satisfying knowledge of God, the will to harmony with the higher laws of the universe, the love power to its home in the bosom of the Father above. Why heredity places us amid such disadvantages we may be unable to explain, but such an experience is the common heritage of humanity.

2. His helplessness colored his whole life. He knew little of the joys of childhood and youth or the pleasures that attend the normal activities of manhood. He was unacquainted with the satisfaction that attends worthy success. He was unable to bring things to pass. The self-respect attending wholesome labor and its fruitage was foreign to his experience. His label of life's value would have contained the most modest figures. It is questionable if he would have considered it really worth the living. It was to him void of honor and was spent in deep poverty. His helplessness so contracted and belittled his life that it could have little significance. If his crippled and helpless body cast such a shadow over all of life, spiritual conditions of like character are attended with shades far deeper and much more widely extended. Helplessness and crookedness of spirit land their victims in a realm of sunless gloom and misanthropy and darkest pessimism. Life sooner or later amid such untoward environments must be recognized as vanity and vexation of spirit. Without

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God and the spiritual and ethical life there is no good under the sun. Wealth and power and fame and culture and every other earthly good depend for real and abiding value upon health and soundness of spirit and a life of fellowship and union with the living God.

II. His Healing. It was not God's plan that he should remain a helpless cripple. Divine provision for soundness and strength was present. For human bodies we have no universal promise of health. But for every soul of man there is healing and fullness of life. Such spiritual deliverance and soundness have their conditions of bestowment. Under the atonement of Christ they are God's free gifts, but there is a conditional process of acceptance and appropriation. The poor cripple of this lesson met the conditions of his deliverance, and they are strikingly illustrative of what must be done to be saved from sin and to obtain spiritual life, the life that abides and satisfies.

1. He recognized himself as a subject of compassion. The word in the Greek rendered "alms" means compassion-money. His needs were very real and pressing. He needed more than food and raiment and shelter. His greater want was healing and soundness. Great wants he experienced, but he makes no claim to rights. Compassion is his hope and plea. It is thus with humanity in its helplessness and lost estate. But God's infinite fullness of compassion and tenderest pity meets every existent and possible need.

2. He submitted to be helped to the place where compassion could reach him and do its work. He was borne to and laid at the gate of God's house. The fountain of tender pity was in Him who dwelt within. The poor cripple was to receive his help through human ministration, but it would come by means of those who frequent the divine courts and have their fellowship with and life in the God of the temple. In such he is able to reproduce his own tenderness and love. To such he imparts peculiar power, the power to make known the great

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Healer and Saviour, Christ. He uses such to lead their fellows to the repentance and faith that condition salvation. They become his messengers of deliverance and life. Peter's hand of love and power laying hold of his weakness enabled our cripple to rise by the exercise of trust in the Son of God. Such helpfulness is included in the calling of every child of God. This poor man received far more than he was seeking for, to begin with. His thought was for help in his abiding helplessness. He knew of no higher good as within his reach. He sought for the best the light he had revealed. God had larger and better plans than he could comprehend. It is always so. We would have compassion exercised amid old conditions. God gave to this helpless one a new body lifted above the need of such compassion as he had sought. Strong and healthful men are not objects of pity. Souls made alive in Christ and possessing fullness of life are children of his household and have the largest rights. It is meet to rejoice with and congratulate them. To compassionate them is neither needful nor seemly. They are among the blessed ones of the universe. Our cripple expressed his faith in willingness and readiness to receive whatever might be given. His will quite outran his intelligence in his trust in Christ. A human will submissive to God, actively accepting his will with all its contents of gifts and requirements, gives expression to the faith that conditions salvation. A spirit thus yielding to Christ gives him his opportunity, and he will in no wise allow it to pass unimproved. The will is paramount in the early exercise of faith. The intellect will have a larger sphere further on. The character and glory of the spiritual life must of necessity remain largely unknown until it becomes experience. Love is a spiritual virtue that can only come to its own in the sons of God. It must in the nature of the case have small place in the faith that brings salvation. In its own time it will rule as queen with its authority unquestioned, but that

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time succeeds healing. Regeneration is the initiation into the life of love and higher knowledge.

III. His Use of Soundness and Strength. God's gifts to body and soul, in nature and in grace, are for use. Unused powers perish and unused gifts are withdrawn. God thus reveals the emphasis he places upon a worthy use of his benefits. The activities of the hero of this lesson when healed are significant and illustrative of what should happen when souls are delivered from the dominion and life of sin.

1. He stood. When by Peter's help he found himself really rising to his feet he put such energy into the act that it is said, "leaping up, he stood." To begin with, this measured the limit of his power. But it was much that he could stand after the years spent in sitting. The force of long-ruling habits is great. It no doubt cost him serious effort. It certainly does in the beginnings of the spiritual life. His success can and needs to be repeated in every religious experience. How long he merely stood we are not told, but the period was short. The Christian life is not one alone of standing.

2. He began to walk. This more aggressive activity began with fear and hesitation. Walking even when power exists is an acquired ability. This is seen in the experience of every little child. It is equally true in the spiritual realm. Walking quickly succeeded standing. It was as if God made haste to help in this new acquisition. Such experience ought to be far more common than it is in the spiritual life. Like encouraging examples have not been wanting. Paul, initiated by faith into Christ, became almost immediately a powerful witness for him. From then until now many new converts have been greatly used to advance the lines of God's kingdom. The spiritual life expresses itself in appropriate activities. Such activities are the condition of its continuance and growth. Their performance may at first be hesitating and uncertain and attended with partial failure. But persistence and per-

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severance in their exercise will bring strength and skill and gracefulness in their accomplishment. Continuance in the awkward squad is the outcome of inattention and sloth. Soon the healed cripple was not simply walking with ease and comfort, but added leaping to the exercise, and that with an exultation that expressed itself in loud praises to God. Such fullness of new life would God give to all his children.

3. His walking brought him into the temple of God. This was not accidental. He has become a member of the household of faith. The disciples are his people. He will cleave to their company. Both duty and privilege prompt them to frequent the courts of God, and he will attend them. But this is by far the smaller part of the explanation of his movements. With a healed body Christ has made his spirit whole and sound. Gratitude will impel him to approach the divine presence and express his appreciation of the grace so richly bestowed. But above and beyond this is the fact that healthful spirits, spirits amid normal conditions, have attained to closest kinship and affinity with the God of all grace and glory. He becomes to them as the magnet to the steel. They are his children by birth and nature, and his fellowship is their life. He has himself become their exceeding great reward and the portion of their inheritance. They in a new sense live and move and have their being in him. They will walk with him through their earthly pilgrimage and beyond the veil through eternal years. It is the nature of the new life to dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The secret place of the Most High is its fatherland.

This miraculous healing, so strikingly illustrative of the mission of Christ, made a most profound impression on multitudes of souls. Large numbers opened their hearts to his gospel and he found acceptance as Saviour and Life. One of the world's chiefest needs is saved men whose new lives will prove the presence and love and power of Him who is its Redeemer and Friend.

LESSON FOR JANUARY 31

THE TRIAL OF PETER AND JOHN

GOLDEN TEXT: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."—Acts 4. 31.

BY EZRA SQUIER TIPPLE, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY, DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
MADISON, NEW JERSEY

MODERN Christianity seems inclined to read the Acts of the Apostles very much as grown-up children read *Æsop's Fables*. The events point a moral, but are unreal, and without vital relation to present-day faith. Pentecost was a fact, perhaps, but the account of it is fantastic and unintelligible, and the modern church has done its duty by that wondrous event when it recognizes the day in its calendar of feasts. Stephen was a man of rare gifts, lived a holy life, and died a glorious death. Christian teachers see the beauty of his character, but do not demand a reincarnation with much expectancy. Is not one Stephen all that the world has a right to expect? One Peter? one Paul? It is undoubtedly true, as has often been said, that there are not many Platos, only one; not many Dantes, or Raphaels; but genius and holiness are not the same commodity. Geniuses cannot be created at will, else every man had been a Milton. But every man may be as holy as Stephen, as zealous as Peter, as fearless as Paul. It is this fact which gives to the Acts of the Apostles something more than an historical quality. What was done can be done again in kind. What was experienced, except in so far as it was local and extraordinary in purpose, can again be experienced.

There is an expression of the text, "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," which occurs in the account of the Pentecost outpouring. The very same

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words are used. On that occasion the coming of the Holy Spirit had resulted in extraordinary gifts. "They began to speak with other tongues." This baptism of the Spirit was a fresh one, and was for the ordinary purposes of Christian living, and with the ordinary fruits which are to remain throughout the ages.

This baptism of the text was a baptism unto witnessing. The early church was a church of testimony. From the lips of the Master the disciples had learned that they were to bear witness. Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit they became evangelists, vibrant harp-strings, flaming lights, echoing voices, and the message of salvation became the joy of countless multitudes. On the steps of the temple, beneath the city walls, at the crossing of the ways, and beside the swift-flowing Kedron, the spirit-anointed disciples told the sacred story of Jesus, unto the quickening of their own hearts and the salvation of many who listened. The world is to be saved by the foolishness of testimony.

Again, this was a baptism unto witnessing with boldness. "They spake the word of God with boldness." This was in direct answer to prayer. They had prayed for just this very thing. The days were evil. After the baptism at Pentecost the disciples had been active; miracles were wrought to show the divine authority. A man lame from birth was healed, and the rulers, in their astonishment and confusion, thrust Peter and John into prison. What worried the magistrates was not that mercy had been shown to a cripple—they could not deny that a notable miracle had been wrought—but the calm boldness of the two disciples. "When they saw their boldness, they marveled, and they took knowledge that they had been with Jesus." There is no mistaking the inspiration of brave witnessing. Peter and John, released from imprisonment and commanded by the authorities not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, went straight to their own company—the upper room company—told everything that had happened,

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and, after a short praise-service for their escape, they all began to pray for power to do just the thing they had been forbidden to do. This was their prayer: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word." And straightway the place was shaken, "a proof," as Bengel says, "that all things are to be shaken by the gospel." "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

The apostolic church was not only a witnessing church, but it was made up of brave, courageous men and women. Is the modern church wanting in boldness? Much is said in the New Testament of this grace of boldness. "Let us therefore come *boldly* unto the throne of grace" (Heb. 4. 16). At Ephesus Paul "went into the synagogue, and spake *boldly* for the space of three months" (Acts 19. 8). When some of the people of Jerusalem heard Jesus they asked, "Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, he speaketh *boldly*, and they say nothing unto him" (John 7. 25, 26). "But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were *bold* in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (1 Thess. 2. 2). Of Joseph of Arimathea we read that he "went in *boldly* unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus" (Mark 15. 43).

There are two New Testament words translated "boldly," the one the equivalent of all-out-spokenness—by implication, assurance and confidence; the other having the meaning to venture, to dare, and, by implication, to be courageous. There are many who feel that both as respects confident assurance and daring, audacious venturesomeness, the present-day church suffers from a comparison with the apostolic church. Is it true that modern Christianity is cowardly, that faith is timid and nerveless, that we are a generation of weaklings? Not long ago an eminent preacher said in

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a sermon before the students of Yale: "We in this easy-going age demonstrate that we have lost all genuine sympathy with the men of better days—days of martyr spirits, days of supremest moral grandeur—have lost capacity for courageous and heroic moral witnessing in so far as we permit the most vital and commanding truths and realities of human life to become open questions, and play fast and loose in our allegiance to them. The passive virtue of humility is indeed a Christian virtue, but it is a virtue which should be matched by the most heroic and aggressive boldness." But is it? Consider the insipidness of much of the so-called discipleship. Is there the same exultant confidence in our songs as when Gustavus Adolphus led his army to battle singing Luther's choral? Do all Christian people know what they believe? The Bible is not taught in the home as formerly. The foundation stones of a holy assurance are often lacking. Many church members talk as if they were not quite sure of anything. In many places the telling of experiences has become a lost art. Is it because we do not have any experiences? Is it to be supposed that if we saw what Peter and John saw we could keep silent? Justin McCarthy characterizes Edmund Burke as "a man of magnificent indiscretion." The church to-day needs something of this same superb quality. Conservatism and propriety are foes of Christian adventure and enterprise. Lack of courage indicates lack of faith. It almost savors of irreligion in an individual, and is deadly folly in an organization of Christian people. For Methodists to be deficient in confidence or valor is to be false to our historic life.

In 1744 John Wesley preached a sermon at Saint Mary's, Oxford, on Scriptural Christianity. The day was Saint Bartholomew's Day, the anniversary of the massacre of two thousand burning and shining lights the previous century. The audience was a large one, made up of the vice-chancellor, the proctors, a vast

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number of students, and a multitude of people, many thousands of whom were in attendance upon the races then being held. Wesley was already known as an enthusiast. The people were anxious to hear him. The text of that famous sermon was this thirty-first verse of the fourth chapter of Acts. I felt as I read the sermon recently the marvelous power of the preacher as he spake by the Holy Ghost, but the people who heard him that August day did not care for it. The sermon was too personal, too pungent, too close in its questioning of their consciences. They were pricked to the heart and cast him out as Stephen was rejected. That was his last sermon before the university. It was not so much the strangeness of the doctrines which gave offense as his fidelity and courage in preaching them. He dared to say what no one there at Oxford would venture to utter, and with what glorious results the world knows.

Not only must the pulpit be outspoken in these days, but the disciples of Christ, being filled with the Spirit, will speak boldly, that is, with confidence and with courage. They will be bold in maintaining their convictions as to the integrity of the Bible, the sanctity of the Sabbath, the sure triumphs of the principles of the kingdom of God. "The world will never be won to righteousness by surrendering at discretion to its dominant spirit." Grave national perils are upon us. It was the witnessing of brave John Knox which in a time of wild crisis saved Scotch and English freedom. Away at Saint Andrew's, broken in body, and scarcely able to stagger up the pulpit stairs, he thundered his confession of faith, and his voice, it is said, was like ten thousand trumpets brayed in the ear of Scottish Protestantism, and turning men of clay into men of steel. The voices of God's servants must be heard in these our times of peril. Pray that God may give you this apostolic spirit for testimony as to your convictions.

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The age demands boldness in witnessing to Christ. It is not enough to stand for denominational tenet or personal conviction. Have you seen Jesus? Then you must bear witness to his beauty. Does he save you? Then tell of it. Does he keep you? Spread the blessed knowledge abroad. Have you joy in the Holy Ghost? Be this your song, "O that the world might taste and see the riches of his grace!" The influence of your confident, courageous testimony cannot be measured. In the days of the frightful gladiatorial combats in Rome, a monk living in the hills, hearing of the horrible exhibitions, made his way to the imperial city and entered the Coliseum, and, as the brutal sport was beginning, leaped from seat to seat into the arena, and faced the combatants, who stood with drawn swords. Then, turning to the vast crowd, he cried in a voice heard to the farthest reaches of the great place of assembly, "Will you praise God by the shedding of innocent blood?" They ran him through with their swords, and the ghastly show went on, but that was the beginning of the end.

His dream became a deed that woke the world;
For while the frantic rabble in half amaze
Stared at him dead, through all the nobler hearts
In that vast Oval ran a shudder of shame.
The Baths, the Forum, gabbled of his death,
And preachers lingered o'er his dying words,
Which would not die, but echoed on to reach
Honorius, till he heard them, and decreed
That Rome no more should wallow in this old lust
Of Paganism, or make her festal hour
Dark with the blood of man who murdered man.

The effect of your witnessing may not prove as revolutionary as that heart cry of the fearless monk, but brave, uncompromising fidelity to Christian ideals, unflinching devotion to your Lord and Master and stanch assurance of his grace in your daily life, and bold witnessing for him will surely hasten the coming of that glorious day when all shall know him, and love him, and serve him.

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 7

TRUE AND FALSE BROTHERHOOD

GOLDEN TEXT: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight."—Prov. 12. 22.

BY CHARLES E. HAMILTON, D.D.

PASTOR TRINITY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
ALBANY, NEW YORK

THE case of Ananias and Sapphira but focuses light on the constant and consistent attitude of the Almighty against falsehood. We find that attitude expressed in the concentrated language of this proverb, but it is also declared in the earliest books of revelation and flames in the apocalyptic description of the Holy City. God is against deceit always and in all things. Indeed, how could it be otherwise? Truth is inseparable from the concept we have of him. God cannot lie. The judgment pronounced so suddenly on Ananias and Sapphira gives us some intimation of God's hatred for deceit. It is no wonder that Montaigne says, "If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth is as much as to say that he is brave toward God and a coward toward man; for a lie faces God and shrinks from man."

There is little consolation for those who would seek excuse for petty deceits in the social relations of life. Whether a lie is ever justifiable has been a frequent and favored question for debate, but if we try to get God's viewpoint it seems rather difficult to frame an argument for any intentional deceit. The kernel of the matter is in the sincerity of purpose. Maltbie Babcock expresses it thus: "The root of honesty is an honest intention, the distinct and deliberate purpose to be true, to handle facts as they are and not as we wish them to be." A very successful man declared that he was first attracted to his wife by noting that she always told the

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exact truth, even when it was most inconvenient to do so and when fabrication would have seemed harmless and have saved her much annoyance. One of the worst things about deceit is its capacity for malignant growth. The man who begins to deceive a little almost unconsciously becomes a liar and so addicted to falsehood that he lies when the most casual observation would have shown it easier as well as better to tell the truth. Lying is in another way like a malignant cancer. It seems to make all other sins easy while most other sins lead to this. No wonder that "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord."

Ruskin pleads that we shall make no distinction between small deceits and large ones, for he says that "while there are some faults slight in the sight of love, some errors slight in the estimate of wisdom, the truth forgives no insult and endures no stain." In another place he says: "Do not let us lie at all. Do not think of one falsehood as harmless, and another as slight, and another as unintended. They may be light and accidental, but they are an ugly soot from the smoke of the pit for all that, and it is better that our hearts should be swept clean of them, without over-care as to which is the largest or blackest." "Speaking truth is like writing fair and comes only by practice. It is less a matter of will than of habit, and I doubt if any occasion can be trivial which permits the practice and formation of such a habit." This was the substance of the position taken by Oliver Wendell Holmes nearly a half century ago in his great address to a class of graduating physicians at Harvard. He told them that they must above all things cultivate truth, and the very fact that because it was necessary sometimes in their profession to avoid a direct reply to the question of a patient, where that reply might endanger life itself, should render them always more than ordinarily concerned to see to it that they did not form a habit of deceitfulness, but that they should be frank, transparent, and sincere.

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It is not necessary for any of us to tell all that we know, but even evasion has to be practiced and handled as one would poisons or high explosives. Truth is ever jealous of her honor. Many a man, who would die rather than lie on some great occasion, falls into the habit of little deceits. This is again a case of "the little foxes that spoil the vines," and above all things we need to form the habit of truth. Ruskin is certainly very felicitous in pointing out some conspicuous examples of violations of truth. He speaks of "the amiable fallacy," in which I presume he intended to allude to the social deceits, such as sending word that one is not in when one does not wish to be seen. He speaks again of "the patriotic lie of the historian," in which the desire to glorify one's country blinds his perception of the truth. He speaks of "the provident lie of the politician," and it is sad that so many illustrations arise in our minds at the very suggestion. He speaks of "the zealous lie of the partisan," who sees nothing bad in that connected with his own party, and nothing good in that connected with the opposition. He speaks in happy phraseology of "the merciful lie of the friend," and reserves for his climax "the careless lie of each man to himself." This is without doubt the most subtle and dangerous heresy that threatens the law of truth. "Any man," the author says, "who pierces through this sham, we thank as if he dug a well in the desert." Then he adds, "Happy for us if the love of truth is still with us."

The progress of the world is a mighty corroboration of the divine attitude toward deceit. Cunning is more or less connected with savagery. As civilization advances, men place more and more emphasis on the truth. In our day straightforward truth has been shown to be the highest triumph of diplomacy. What this means for the future it is hard to estimate adequately. The business world advances toward the divine ideal. The firms that gain permanent success do it on a reputation

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they have earned for square dealing. Deceit in the business world is being surely if slowly exterminated. The people have demanded that false labels should not be permitted on the goods they buy. The government has vindicated the demand, and now the label must tell the truth or fines and imprisonment confront the responsible parties. Corporate honesty is beginning to be demanded. One of the aggravations of the guilt of Ananias and Sapphira was their complicity in the effort to deceive. For a generation past it has not been a strange thing to discover that a man whose private morals were irreproachable had no sense of corporate honesty. The new day is dawning for the world when men begin to carry their private sense of the necessity for truthfulness into their corporate relations.

It has already become evident to us that deceit in religious matters must be even more reprehensible and dangerous than anywhere else. Lying to God is the worst possible affront; and lying to the church is a great calamity. What meaning is conveyed by the history of Ananias and his equally guilty wife? The desire to receive more credit for generosity than they deserved and to be placed on the pedestal where the early church had already located Barnabas led them into shameful deceit and to an ignominious death. What danger must ever attend those who pretend they are giving to their full limit when they know they are not! It is a shame and disgrace to permit some one else to sacrifice for us, or without sacrifice to give the part that we ought to give for the advancement of God's kingdom. No wonder we are enjoined to keep our feet as we go to the house of God. Is there anyone who can estimate what would happen if all church members truly gave their honest portion to the church? The Lord's treasury would be full and the world would receive its opportunity for being evangelized in our generation. The indications are all too few that any large proportion of the church

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is awake to its duty in this matter. The indications are all too many that it will never rise to its power or privilege until it does respond to this divine appeal and most patent duty. Let us not suppose that all the force of the divine repugnance to lying is spent on insincere Christians. What shall we say of the men who feel the force of the divine appeal but refuse to become religious men because they wish to shirk the duties involved? Such try to hide behind their invectives against insincere and hypocritical professors. They manufacture specious intellectual reasons to account for their attitude toward religion, when in their hearts they know the real reason for their refusal to assume the obligations of the church. They may well consider the challenge, "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" The man who shirks any recognized religious duty may be sure that absence of profession will not absolve him from the decree involved by the statement of the text.

The text makes us glad because of its optimism. It does not leave us with the impression that all men are insincere and that all are liars. It breathes with the characteristic note of divine hopefulness: "They that deal truly are his delight." God never forgets his seven thousand trusted followers. In the desert of lies tower the men of truth who are his delight and joy. No wonder God rejoices in the man of truth. God alone cannot produce him. The man must respond to the divine ideal. His response is evidence that the moral law and the gift of Christ have not been in vain. The appearance of the men of truth is the delight of God's heart. There are multitudes of such true hearts. Over against Ananias stands Barnabas—so utterly sincere, so willing to sacrifice for his conviction that he became known as the son of consolation. While the text directs our attention to God's delight in an honest man, we are not forbidden to think of the bless-

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ing to the world that comes from a transparently honest life. What would the widow and the orphan do but for the lawyer with the reputation for utter honesty? What would we do with our sick but for the honest physician? What would become of our very fabrics of business were it not for the business men of perfect integrity? It is no wonder that men have approved the proverb, "An honest man is the noblest work of God."

We may be sure that such deceit as that practiced by Ananias and Sapphira does not suddenly become possible. These two had not been leading transparent lives, else they could never have united in this horrible compact of falsehood. Every deflection from the truth makes a wider divergence almost inevitable. He who does not see this danger and call a halt comes to the place where he will choose a lie even when the truth would serve him better. The habit of lying carries in itself its sure and certain punishment. Can anyone imagine a worse fate than to be shut up in a company of liars? The law of spiritual gravitation will inevitably lead the liar to his own company. It is needless to say that company will be without the Holy City.

There is an evangel for the liar. The man of falsehood may become the man of truth. The denier of the Lord may become the first apostle. The man of deceit may become the chief scorner of a lie. The Master did not scourge Peter from his presence, but he looked on him, and that look revealed as nothing else could do to Peter the sham and falsity of deceit, and the glory and the beauty of truth. Christ is very merciful, but he will never be satisfied until we put away all deceit and speak only the truth in love. None of us will realize our ideal without a vision of Him who is himself the truth and the way, and without that surrender of our sins and that consecration of our lives to him that place us where we can realize the promise, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 14

THE APOSTLES IMPRISONED

GOLDEN TEXT: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—
Matt. 5. 10.

THE REWARD OF THE PERSECUTED

BY ULYSSES F. HAWK, D.D.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT SPOKANE DISTRICT, COLUMBIA RIVER
CONFERENCE, SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

THE gospel opens with a blessing again and again. And here is a benediction for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Doubtless these words in all ages have consoled the sufferers for Christ in dungeons, on the rack, and amid flames of fire. The martyrs and patriots who waged our first battles for religion and liberty made nobleness epidemic. Oft stoned and mobbed in the cities they founded and loved, they fled into exile, where they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and slept in the holes of the earth. However, the institutions most eminent and excellent in our days represent the very principles for which these martyrs died and, dying, conquered.

That there is antagonism between the spirit of the true Christian and the world is inevitable. A true Christian should be a standing rebuke to the world. There are but two ways of ending that antagonism, either by bringing the world up to Christian standards or by letting the Christian standards down to the world. In maintaining truth and right, and all those principles which truly make for the peace and blessing of the world, the Christian will find room for the most heroic firmness and for the bravest activity. He will have blows to take and sufferings to endure. The scourge, the prison, and the stake have been his fate.

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Both the persecutors and the persecuted shall have their reward. To the persecutors belongs the kingdom of hell, but to the true sufferers for Christ belongs the kingdom of heaven.

The persecution named in this benediction seems to consist of bodily torture and martyrdoms. Hence the reward is the glorified kingdom of God. "They are happy who suffer" seems a strange saying: and that the righteous should suffer, merely because they are such, seems as strange. But such is the enmity of the human heart to everything of God and goodness, that all those who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution in one form or another. As the religion of Christ gives no quarter to vice, so the vicious will give no quarter to religion or its professors. Persecution has ever been powerless in persuading the true followers of Christ from their faith and hope. Bonner, Bishop of London, asked a youth who was brought before him whether he thought he could bear the fire. The boy held his hand at once, without flinching, in the flame of a candle that stood by. Rogers, a fellow-worker with Tyndale in the translation of the Bible, and one of the foremost among the Protestant preachers, died bathing his hands in the flames as if it had been cold water. Even the commonest lives have gleamed for a moment into poetry at the stake. "Pray for me," a boy, William Brown, who had been brought home to Brentwood to suffer, asked of the bystanders. "I will pray no more for thee," one of them replied, "than I will pray for a dog." "Then," said William, "Son of God, shine upon me," and immediately the sun in the elements shone out of a dark cloud so full in his face that he was constrained to look another way; whereat the people mused, because it was so dark a little time before. These heroes were among the first in England to dare earth's despots. They won the victory over every form of vice and sin. In all the history of the world there is no chapter

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comparable to the glorious achievements of these Christians. Their deeds shine on the pages of history like the glittering stars of the night. It is marvelous how the brave deeds of a single Christian have rallied the wavering hosts; "flashing the lightning through the centuries and kindling whole nations into a holy enthusiasm."

The early martyrs in their fearful sufferings certainly had respect for the recompense of the glorious reward of "the kingdom of heaven." Faith in their all-conquering Lord was implicit. Such endurance would have been impossible only for his presence in sustaining them in their sufferings. Jesus Christ himself was exposed to the severest sufferings. The four evangelists record the dreadful scenes. After the death of Christ the apostles suffered every evil which the malice of the Jews could invent and their mad zeal could execute. They who read the Acts of the Apostles will find that, like their Master, Christ's followers were despised and rejected of men and treated with the utmost indignity and contempt. The dreadful reign of Nero can never be forgotten. All persons who openly avowed themselves as Christians were apprehended and condemned to death. Both men and women suffered death at his hands—some by scourgings, some by the sword, and some by fire. Houses that were filled with Christians were set on fire, and whole companies were tied together with ropes and thrown into the sea. During the reign of Diocletian it is related that seventeen thousand were slain in one week's time; and that during the continuance of the persecutions in the province of Egypt alone no less than one hundred and forty-four thousand Christians died by the violence of persecution.

Numerous were the persecutions of different sects from Constantine's time to the Reformation. But when the famous Martin Luther arose, and opposed the errors and ambitions of the Church of Rome, and the senti-

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ments of this good man began to spread, the Pope and his clergy joined all their forces to hinder their progress. The friends of the Reformation were anathematized and excommunicated, and the life of Luther was often in danger, though at last he died on a bed of peace. The Inquisition, which was established in the twelfth century against the Waldenses, was now more effectually set to work. Terrible persecutions were carried on in various parts of Germany, and the blood of saints was said to flow like rivers of water. Who can recall the awful deeds of the past without feeling the most painful emotions, and drop a tear over the depravity and madness of mankind? The time is coming when truth shall universally triumph, and the supremacy and glory of God be everywhere adored.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and
the Word;

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim
unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

It is commonly acknowledged that the seeds of the persecution temper are in the human nature, and that they germinate in the conditions which Christianity brings with it. The more severe forms of persecution belong to the former ages. Freedom of thought is now allowed. The effect of Christianity upon popular morality has been to bring men up toward the standard of Christian righteousness. The long proclamation of Christian truth in the world has the effect of making even the profession of it a perfectly safe and proper thing, but the antagonism remains at the bottom the same. Let a person accept the creed of the established religion and try to live by it, he will meet with opposition from the world. Let him seek to proclaim and enforce some of these truths of Christianity whose bearing upon social and economical and ecclesiastical questions are but partially understood. Let him set up and stick

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to a high standard of Christian morality, and see what comes of it in business or in social life. All who will live godly lives will to a degree suffer persecution. The present forms of persecution are perhaps not less to bear than the old ones. They are no doubt very small in contrast with the lion in the arena, or the fires of Smithfield. The curled lip, the civil scorn, the alienation of those whose good opinion we would love to have, or, if we stand in some public position, to receive the slander of the press. These may be trivial but are real tokens of dislike. We have the assassin's tongue instead of the assassin's dagger. This may call for as much heroism as braving a rack or a furnace.

The reason why so many professing Christians today know so little about persecution is because there is so little difference between them and the world. It seems to have been decided by common consent that there must be little difference between the church and the world. Under these conditions there will be little persecution—"where religion goes in silver slippers, and you find Christian men running neck and neck with others and no man can tell which is which."

The flag of our profession should never come down, and though it may be an effort to avow our principles we should never flinch. Ours is a holy cause. It is righteousness and Christ which are the ground of our devotion, and not our own faults of temper and character. True discipleship means the absolute surrender of our all to the service of Christ, and service under the most difficult and apparently obstructed conditions. Nothing is to exist merely for itself. The birds do not sing for themselves. The flower does not bloom for itself. Every bird that sings and every flower that blooms contributes something to the beauty and life of the world. Every Christian has entered upon a great mission, that of helping humanity out of the darkness of sin, and ever lifting it toward the star of our hope.

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“Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Christians are encouraged to suffer joyfully on two considerations: they are thereby conformed to the prophets who went before them, and to become the possessors of the great reward of heaven. God gives the grace to suffer, and then crowns that grace with glory. It is not implied by this that a Christian man’s blessedness depends on the accident of some other man’s behavior to him, or that martyrs have a place which none others can reach. But theirs is the kingdom of heaven as a natural result of the character which brings about persecution. The truth about the heavenly kingdom comes warm from a loving heart, yearning over the woes of a weary and heavy-hearted humanity. Blessedness is essentially spiritual; it depends not so much on a man’s condition as on what he is in his life. It needs no great effort of imagination to see that if men in general were to make it their main endeavor in life to be what they ought to be, rather than to scramble for what they can get, this earth would speedily become a moral paradise.

In expounding the blessedness of the kingdom the Master has unfolded the character of the members, thus not only explaining the nature of the kingdom and the advantages to be enjoyed under it, but also showing who those are that belong to it. That this was intended seems evident from the first and the last of the Beatitudes, both ending with the emphatic words, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” It is as if on the two gates at the hither and the farther end of this beautiful garden were inscribed the words, “The truly blessed ones, the citizens of the commonwealth of heaven, are those who are at home here.”

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 21

STEPHEN THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

GOLDEN TEXT: "They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."—Acts 7. 59.

BY HARVEY WINFIELD EWING, D.D.

PASTOR TRINITY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

THE text introduces us to the first Christian martyr—Stephen, the first of a glorious company of whom the world was not worthy.

I. *The Man.* Back of the martyr is the Christian, back of the Christian is the man. Our study naturally begins with the man. Who was he? And what were his characteristics? He comes suddenly upon the scene, and departs as quickly. An emergency arises in the church demanding the attention of the apostles. Finding themselves burdened with too heavy administrative responsibilities, they request the church to select wise men to whom such matters could be safely committed. The church elected seven men, of whom Stephen is the first named and the most prominent. The emergency called forth the man, as is usual in church and state. How long he had been a Christian we do not know. Was he one of the company of Greeks who came to the disciples saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus"? Was he one of the one hundred and twenty who saw the Lord ascend, and who returned to Jerusalem with great joy to pray down the Pentecost? Or was he one of the three thousand converted on the birthday of the church? The record is meager. Back into the history of the man we cannot go. His nationality was probably Greek. His name would indicate that origin. He may have belonged to some noble family who could trace their history to the men of

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Greece, who were prominent in her affairs in the day of her glory. It matters not so much what a man's antecedents were as what the issues of the man's life are; not so much who as what he is; not so much whence he comes as what he is doing and whither tending. Heredity may be a blessing or a curse. Whatever the ancestry of Stephen, he proved himself a man and won his immortality. He is indeed Stephen—the crowned one.

There are two important characteristics of the man which are worthy of our notice: 1. He was "full of faith." This quality of the soul—an endowment native to all—was in him developed to a very high degree. His was a strong, virile faith, as is abundantly proved by his life. No man reaches complete development of character, nor attains to the heights possible to him, until he has brought to perfection the faith faculty with which God endowed him. Darwin lamented late in life that he had no interest in music, largely because he failed to cultivate that side of his nature. So any one is incomplete who has failed to cultivate his faith so that it is equal to the demands of his spiritual life.

2. Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost." Pentecost was repeated and continued in him. The Holy Spirit energized every power of his being till it was at its best. Full of faith and the Holy Ghost, he was a model church officer. He stands as an example for all church workers. In the business affairs of the church men are sorely needed who possess these qualities. Leadership in the church is never safe in the hands of men—no matter how brilliant their talents—without these fundamental qualities. Nothing will atone for the lack of these, neither great liberality, nor great wisdom, nor great devotion. The message of Stephen the Man to the men of the church to-day is a message of vital importance, namely, the need of these two qualities—fullness of faith, and of the Holy Ghost.

II. His Work. The work which Stephen was elected

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to do was important. It had become too much of a burden on the apostles, who suggested to the church that it was not "reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." A complaint arose to the effect that in the daily distribution of the alms of the church the Grecian widows were neglected to the advantage of the Hebrew widows. The question of race early projected itself into the church. Hence men of wisdom and full of the Holy Ghost must be selected to adjust the new difficulty. So Stephen was chosen as a man eminently qualified to attend to this work. That he did the humble, yet important, work well there can be no doubt. The character of the man guaranteed its faithful performance. But Stephen did not long remain in this office. His work faithfully performed here became a stepping-stone to higher things, to larger usefulness. He was too big a man to be kept in the first office to which he had been elected. He was possessed of qualities which demanded a wider field for their exercise. Very naturally, therefore, he glided into his real work as a preacher of the word. The record declares that he "did great wonders and miracles among the people." He met the leaders of the synagogues and vanquished them by the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke. For the time, at least, he outshines and outdoes the Twelve. He becomes the leading champion of the Christ. He found his place and was at home in it. Happy the worker who quickly finds the place for which God has fitted him and who, in that place, however humble or however exalted, is faithful to the demands of it. God will take care of the worker if the worker will give himself to the work with all his powers. Stephen as a faithful worker has a message to the modern laborer in the Lord's vineyard.

III. *His Death.* Stephen as a preacher soon stirred up violent opposition. His opponents, finding themselves outargued by Stephen, stirred up the prejudices of the crowd. If they could not answer the arguments of this

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new apostle they could stone him to death under the form of law. And this they proceeded to do. They easily procured men who were willing to say (for graft), "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God." This was enough for the crowd wanting a chance at the bold preacher. They hurried him to the Sanhedrin, where the charge was repeated. The high priest put the question to Stephen, "Are these things so?" Given his opportunity, Stephen made a defense in which he reviewed the religious history of his people, to which the people listened with interest. But suddenly the preacher broke off from his historical narrative with a scathing denunciation of the people. The thrust went home. They hurry him out of the city. It is a wild and awful scene. Savage brutal nature acting under the forms of religion, and in its name, is in the ascendancy. With great stones they crush their victim to death.

This was a violent death. Like his Master, this man dies a cruel death. When once the mob had a taste of blood its appetite was whetted and it demanded more victims. Many other Christians were arrested, while others were compelled to flee. The age of persecutions is long past. But these heroic men and women died not in vain. Their heroism and faith are the heritage of the whole church. Who is not inspired to nobler self-sacrificing service in the conquest of this world for our Master by the history of these who died as martyrs. But while the death of Stephen was a violent one, yet, mercifully, it was quickly over. The heavy stones did their work quickly. In this particular it was in striking contrast to the death of our Lord. For six hours he hung on the cross before the body succumbed to death. But the first martyr is quickly released from his suffering. For ages the church has been praying to be delivered from sudden death, as though the suddenness added to its terror. To many minds in this day sudden death appears to be the worst form of

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death. But, after all, is not sudden death a real blessing? When one considers the pain, the weariness, the anguish of a lingering sickness sudden death seems indeed a blessing. Blessed is the Christian who passes in a moment out of this life into the glories of the heavenly home. Blessed is the one who ceases at once to labor and to live. Sudden death is sudden glory.

The death of Stephen was a triumphant one. Looking on the scene as described for us by the master hand of Saint Luke, we forget the howl of the mob, and see only the transfigured face of the saint. His triumph began before the mob hurled the first stone. But many a saint nearing the borders of the spirit land has caught up and reflected the glory of the heavenly world. Not only did the face of the martyr glow with the beauty of an angel, but there was granted unto him a vision of the home to which he was going. Yes, it was a triumph, a glorious victory.

Note the difference between this death and the death of our Saviour. What a contrast! The Saviour of men went out of this world in the midst of horrible darkness. For about the ninth hour of that wonderful day the sun withdrew his face, refusing to look upon the awful scene. The earth trembled under the throes of a great convulsion, as if it would utter its protest against the tragedy being enacted on its bosom. The thunder in amazement uttered its voice, while the lightning's angry bolt added to the protests of nature. But the light of God surrounded Stephen in his hour of death. The Son of man rises from his throne to receive him with honor, while all heaven is jubilant. But when the Son of God dies on Calvary darkness and gloomy night at midday prevail. When Jesus was on the cross he was in mysterious soul darkness also. His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" must have meant the momentary loss of the consciousness of the Father's presence. But while we wonder with great amazement at this darkness during the death of our

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Lord we rejoice that by his death is made possible the triumphant death of all his followers. Jesus went out in darkness that we might go to our death in the light of his face.

The death of Stephen was one potent in influence. Not only was it the means of driving the Christians out of Jerusalem, where they had centered, and sending them to the regions round about to publish the glad news of salvation, but it was the direct cause of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who was not only a witness of his death, but in a measure responsible for it. "If Stephen had not prayed the church had not had Paul." The death of the one meant the conversion of the other. So Stephen lived in the life of the mighty man who shaped the thought of the early church and controls the religious thinking of to-day. So the great leaders fall, as fall they must, but others spring up. There is a legend which declares that when the head of Paul fell from the block of the executioner to the ground immediately there sprung from the place where it struck fountains of water. The legend is suggestive of a fact, namely, that wherever the great apostle went there did gush forth streams of living water that are still flowing for the refreshing of the sons of men. So God's true workers die not in vain; they still live in the lives of those they have led to Jesus. The spirit of the first martyr is in the church to-day. There are hosts of noble men and women who are ready either to live or die for their Lord. In mission lands and in the hard places of the home field these heroic souls are toiling and dying, glad in any way to serve the Lord who bought them. O may their spirit be ours, their heroism ours, their triumph ours, and their reward ours—even the approval of the Master, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord"! O may we be worthy to join that innumerable company—who "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"

LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 28

THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA

GOLDEN TEXT: "The people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."—Acts 8. 6.

BY R. EMORY BEETHAM, D.D.

PRESIDENT SCIO COLLEGE, SCIO, OHIO

A NUMBER of nuggets may be found in this gold mine—several subjects present themselves for consideration in connection with this Golden Text: "The Relation of Bodily Healing to Spiritual Helpfulness"; "The Uses of Opposition: the Church Persecuted and Scattered"; "Philip, Our Ideal Preacher"; "Pulpit and Pew." These and other subjects come to mind, but the one which the writer wishes to present here is: The Christian Church a Universal Spiritual Brotherhood. That Christianity is not confined to any particular race or nation, and that it does not consist of particular forms of ritualistic service, are clearly suggested by a consideration both of the people to whom Philip preached and Philip's attitude toward them and certain individuals with whom he came in contact.

First, then, let us gather from a consideration of the Samaritans, the people to whom Philip preached, and their acceptation of the Christian doctrine a few points to the end that the salvation of Christ is not for the Jews only but for all the races of men.

The multitude to whom Philip preached, as mentioned in the text, were Samaritans, who are an interesting people and have conspicuous mention more than once in the New Testament. They were a mixed people from the intermarriages of the native Jews and the foreign colonists sent to Palestine by the Assyrians at the time of the captivity. When the Israelites returned from captivity they were intensely exclusive and re-

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fused the proffered assistance of the Samaritans in building the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. This engendered bad feelings between the Jews and the Samaritans, which intensified with time and resulted in frequent outbursts of hostile activity between them. This hatred was mutual, and the pot could not call the kettle black. Each seemed to vie with the other in meanness, although the Samaritans were usually the aggressors. They appropriated Jewish lands, seized Jews and sold them as slaves; on one occasion they deposited dead bodies in the cloisters of the temple, and on another put to death a party of Galileans who were passing through Samaria on their way to Jerusalem. The Jews expressed their bitterness of feeling toward their neighbors in these biting words: "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a demon" (John 8. 48).

Two or three references are made in the gospels to the Samaritans, and in each case they are a despised, alien, obnoxious people; but in each case also they are shown by Jesus to be worthy of salvation. Once, as Jesus was passing along the border of Samaria, ten lepers craved his healing help, but only one, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; . . . and *he was a Samaritan.*" Jesus referred to him as a stranger, an alien, and said, "Arise, and go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." Again, as the Master with his disciples was passing through Samaria, he sat at Jacob's well and conversed with a woman of that vicinity who reminded him that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus, nevertheless, preached unto her himself and his Messiahship, and she in turn testified to the people and through their combined efforts many Samaritans believed on him. The third reference is the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which this stranger of a Samaritan, hated and despised, is graphically depicted to the Jew as his neighbor and held up as worthy of his love—love equal to the love of self.

THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA

It was among such a despised people in the estimation of the Jews that Philip went to preach after having been driven from the Holy City. He was the first foreign missionary to visit them, and the first to fulfill the parting declaration of Jesus: "And ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and *Samaria*" (Acts 1. 8).

Philip standing among those alien Samaritans preaching the gospel of Christ was a realization of the apparently idealistic teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." It was a foregleam of the teaching of Paul when he wrote: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one (man) in Christ Jesus." Since such despised and outcast people are the object of Christ's love, we cannot but be impressed with the thought that Christianity is the universal religion destined to bring salvation and joy to every sorrowing, dying child of man. There is no race to be despised, no people to be neglected, no individual unworthy of Christ's salvation. God hath made of one blood all nations of men, and in Christ all men are brothers.

And second, it will be seen from a consideration of the career of Philip both in going to the Samaritans and his treatment of them and others, specially the Ethiopian eunuch, that Christianity is a spiritual force and not a mere outward form.

In Philip we are confronted with an admirable character of broad sympathy and remarkable elasticity who seemed free from the narrow prejudices that characterized the worshipers of his church and nation. The Jews were so strong in the conviction that their religion was for them only, and that Jehovah was their God alone, that for all others there was no hope of salvation. That remarkable story of Jonah in the Old

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Testament shows with what difficulty a Jew could preach salvation to a Gentile city. The same selfish narrowness prevailed in Jesus's time as seen from the conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. And Peter was thrice commanded by a heavenly voice to eat of the food let down from heaven before he could see that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10. 34, 35). And even Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, could not bring himself to preach to the nations until the Jews had first thrust aside the gospel and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. Only then did he turn to the Gentiles. Only then could he hear the Lord's command, saying,

I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles,
That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part
of the earth.

Philip threw aside this narrow prejudice which strongly prevailed among the worshipers of Jehovah, and when persecution disturbed his work as a deacon in Jerusalem he at once proceeds to the city of Samaria and proclaims unto them the Christ. I know that Philip's name implies that he may have been a Hellenist, and I am aware that the Samaritans were of partial Hebrew descent and partially accepted Judaism; but even if Philip was a Hellenist he was also a Jew, and even if the Samaritans were of partial Hebrew descent and partially accepted Judaism they were none the less rigidly excluded from the Jewish church and denied even the privilege accorded to heathens of becoming proselytes. Philip the Jew preached unto these Samaritans the Christ!

Also, on another occasion, Philip rises still higher in the scale of our appreciation when he overcomes one of the bitterest feelings that possess the hearts of men, namely, hatred toward the black man. He mastered

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this passion and sat beside a man of Ethiopia, preached unto him Jesus, and baptized him unto the salvation of his soul. This Ethiopian as such belonged to a despised race (the supposition that he was a Jew born in Ethiopia is merely a supposition without ground for serious consideration), and being literally a eunuch, as he unquestionably was in the service of this queen, he was inadmissible into full membership in the Jewish church (Deut. 23. 1). This personage Philip by divine appointment met in his chariot on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza. When Philip saw him reading the Scriptures he ran to him and opened unto him the word of God, to the joy of his heart.

How fraught with significance is this event! Disregarding national and religious prejudice, Philip, the evangelist that he was, declared unto this foreign-born son of a despised race, this physical outcast of the Jewish church, that God is no respecter of persons, that Jesus died for all men, that the kingdom is open to all people who put their confidence in Christ, regardless of race or outward condition. Philip the Jew and Caucasian preached to this Ethiopian and heathen and declared unto him Jesus!

Neither did Philip quibble over the petty forms and difficulties that beset him. Although merely a deacon, when necessity arises he becomes a preacher, a missionary, an evangelist—even more, *the evangelist*. He is not blocked by the unsympathetic Samaritans, nor by the arch magician Simon Magus, nor by the Ethiopian eunuch. He is not disturbed by the question as to whether these outsiders should be baptized, nor is he troubled as to the particular form of its administration. He is not upset by the fact that his preaching is on the roadside or street instead of in the synagogue, nor that his congregation is small or large. He is equal to all emergencies, and on all occasions strikes to the root of the matter and touches the heart of the truth.

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“It is said that if a circle of chalk be traced about a goose, the poor fowl, because he is a goose, will steadfastly refuse to step across the line—not though he starve to death within the chalk circle; not though he lose his life by his timidity.” How are we thus circumscribed by customs and forms. We give attention to these secondary things and neglect the weightier matters of the law. We are often more concerned as to the form than as to the fact. The line is of more importance than the life. The fact is many are already dead inside the circle—starved rather than step over a line of ancient custom.

O, for the free, original, independent spirit of the evangelist, that we might leap the rotten pales of prejudice, burst the links of custom, penetrate into the heart of the truth, and see the proper application of Christianity to life and conditions in this twentieth century in which we live! O, to see that the soul and God are the realities, that the great thing is to bring these realities into harmony, to restore the broken brotherhood of mankind, and to unite all nations and peoples into one great family with Jehovah our God as the Father of us all!

What care I for caste or creed?
It is the deed, it is the deed;
What for class, or what for clan?
It is the man, it is the man;
Heirs of love and joy and woe,
Who is high and who is low?
Mountain, valley, sky and sea,
Are for all humanity.

What care I for robe or stole?
It is the soul, it is the soul;
What for crown, or what for crest?
It is the heart within the breast;
It is the faith, it is the hope,
It is the struggle up the slope;
It is the brain and eye to see
One God and *one* humanity.

LESSON FOR MARCH 7

PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN

GOLDEN TEXT: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—John 5. 39.

BY CHARLES BENNETT, A.M.

PASTOR SAINT JOHN'S METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
TOLEDO, OHIO

IF we were to give this lesson and this Golden Text a theme, we might appropriately call it "The Message of the Scriptures."

The Holy Scriptures, not to place undue sanctity by the use of the word "holy" upon the writings, nor to pay a tribute to tradition, but to emphasize the larger appreciation that thoughtful people with the growing years are giving to the Bible, command for us to-day a larger interest than they did when, beclouded with tradition, Christ said to the Jew, "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life." How truly sacred! Not the glamour of the fetich! No, but a modern, open-eyed glow of the soul's fellowship with the Father who is spelling out his love for his children in the revelation of himself in the literature of the Bible.

The Holy Scriptures are the literature of Revelation. It will be well for us to consider that Revelation is not synonymous with its literature. Christ was before the Gospels were written. He said, "Before Abraham was born, I am"; so that we must conclude that the Old Testament writings as well must have the significance of the inherent revelation in Christ, though fore-gleamed "of old time . . . in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners." But the literature of the Scriptures carries the revelation. God spoke so that the Scriptures bear a profound purpose and in-breathing, and are united by an "organic function,"

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clearly defined and masterful in its power. Link by link, God has forged the chain to make known the "mystery of godliness."

I. *The Scriptures are an interpretation of life by means of lives.* The Bible may be said to be a study in biography. It is a very interesting book because it is of supreme human interest. As history is the study of its greatest actors, around whom are gathered events, relations of time, circumstances, tendencies, and minor personages, whereby destiny weaves the fabric of progress and civilization, and marks the tread of generations, so the Bible is a galaxy of persons who have given scope to God's purpose. It may be a trite saying that the Christian religion discovered individuality. Thus it seems that life, even eternal life, could not be revealed except through the shuttle-like play of lives in human relations and experiences. Every period of the Bible records is marked by strong characters. How very human it all seems to study these characters as they act the drama of life! How volitional; how drawn with human passion; how intent with vision of good and evil, with brotherhood, with family ties, with problems of origin and destiny, with the red blood of responsibility! Men like ourselves: men with foibles, men with sin, men of the times and men of all time—how we love these men! When they have sinned, how we pity them! But they are strong men; strong somehow even when they have sinned. They seem to be speaking to us from the breastworks of a great struggle; from archives where musty tomes hitherto have defied the inquiring gaze; from mountain tops heretofore innocent of the song of birds. These strong men bear to our hearts a song and to our vision a gleam of a better day. Life indeed! To know it God has placed in a variety of lands, from among differing races, where the paths of the nations pass, men who through the various years have been weaving the fabric of life.

II. *The Scriptures contain a revelation of man's*

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best and God's best. The story of life in the Scriptures is the life of great men. These are stars of the first magnitude. Greatness is from within. Where in the world have we found such men as Moses, or Samuel, or David? Where is there a man who went west and built a history like Abraham? Where a statesman like Samuel, or a songster like David, or a preacher who spoke to his times like Amos?

We must conclude that it was not ordinary, or extraordinary, genius in these men, but God working in them and through them. The greatness of a man is the greatness of God in him. Inspiration is hard of definition, and to distinguish between the inspiration that distinguished the writers and actors of the Scriptures, and they in varying degrees, and the genius of other religionists and great men in every age, is exceedingly difficult. Evidently the choice of a race of people was not accidental, much less the choice of men in that race. The "woe is me" was the secret of God's men. "It was not they that spoke," says McFadyen, "but the spirit that spoke in them." Says Sanday, "The distinguishing characteristic of the prophets, first of their speech and actions, and afterward of their writings, was the firm and unwavering belief that they were instruments or organs of the Most High." Inspiration, then, is of the Spirit. God's first work was, then, to find expression in living men. Their greatness was not an accident of a religious race, or the exclusiveness of that race, or of environment in which they lived, but the speaking forth what had been spoken into their lives.

The greatness of their lives was portrayed in *a great literature.* It was great in its freightage of truth. "The law" and "the gospel" are terms that suggest that moral and spiritual revelation which has well been defined as "the record of the redeeming activity of God, culminating in the history of the Redeemer." It was great in its literary excellence. Compared with religious literature of any other people in any other

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age, it is not only superior in its moral breadth and tone which give it dignity; but, moreover, because of God's revelation, because of the supernatural distinction given to the expression of morality in ethical codes, and progressively in unfolding institutions, and because of the conception of God's immanence, personally and in the state and church, the literature of the Old Testament has been given a breadth, a stateliness, an optimism, a diction, a potency, which cannot be found in any of the historic religions. Archæological discussion would not be timely here; suffice it to say that this book has molded nations, has inspired the greatest literary geniuses, has mastered statesmen, and has formed the germ-life for the best literature of the world. Its influence on literature has been supreme.

Stars are poor books, and oftentimes do miss;
This book of stars lights to eternal bliss.

The Scriptures likewise and more especially contain also God's best. All would have been in vain; all would have been an anticlimax, a story without a hero, if man at his best had not found God's best, Jesus Christ, through whom, "at the end of these days," God spoke to us as his Son. What a glory crowns the Scriptures when, searching them, we at last have found Jesus Christ! Sad indeed is the commentary on the scholarship which, searching the Scriptures, has missed the Christ. The Jews, sad to speak, searched the Scriptures, yet they missed Jesus. Christ came at a time when traditionalism had so weighted down the Scriptures that it had destroyed life. What a tragedy! The people among whom God had given the greatest portrayal of life were at last to have lost him. The text carries a stinging rebuke: "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life"; but Christ says, "and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." Many to-day are "searching" the Scriptures

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but they have missed Christ. The end of the study has destroyed the benefit of the study. It may be pride of scholarship, mere scholasticism. It may be controversy, the defense of a school of scholars, or a position taken in the critical world. Lost him! Lost **HIM**! The pride of learning may cause us to lose our crown. Dr. Buttz used to say that “the mysteries of the Bible are less so as a man grows in piety.” Harrison (Problems of Christianity and Scepticism, p. 282), giving an account of his own experience, says: “How I found my way out of the darkness is easily told, for it was in fact the only way. It was by finding Christ himself. I had lost him even in the Bible. At last I turned to the four Gospels and stayed there.”

Sunday school teacher, have you missed Christ among institutions, traditions, history, moral platitudes, and ethical heroes? Look again into the Book of books. The Scriptures have one purpose. Jesus reverenced the Scriptures and understood their motive. “These are they which bear witness of me,” said he. The “organic function” is very clear. It is the revelation and setting forth of God’s best, Jesus, the Saviour. The exposition of the Scriptures by the apostles was a setting forth of the Bible in the face of Jesus Christ, God reconciling the world unto himself in Christ. The theme of the Scriptures is Christ, and he may be found in every portion. The Bible has well been termed “a history of salvation.” Well did Philip say, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” So that Jesus appears in the Scriptures as the Master and Authority in religion, the end of the Scriptures, who, through them, reveals his mission.

III. *The message of the Scriptures is the mission of Christ.* “And Philip preached unto him Jesus.” What a message! Jesus, Saviour! How grand the Scriptures must have been to this Ethiopian in the light of their inward meaning! How glorious with in-

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tent, how sublime with love, how illuminating with purpose, God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself!

Word of the everlasting God,
Will of his glorious Son;
Without thee how could earth be trod,
Or heaven itself be won?

Christianity is a religion of a Book, but it is more. Christianity is the religion of a Person. The mission of Jesus vindicates the Book about him. Marvelous adaptability, the Book and the Person; a sublime harmony, earth and heaven, men and God joined unto everlasting life! The evangelism of the Book will demonstrate the power of the Person; the power of the Person will verify the reality of the Book. It is no wonder that he said unto his disciples, "Go preach the kingdom of God." Philip was a practical evangelist. He was an opportunist of the best sort. He embraced an occasion and did the one thing the Christian church is called to—he expounded unto him the Scriptures and preached unto him Jesus. If Jesus is the "way, the truth, and the life," then he must be the ultimate solvent for all life's problems and the satisfaction for all life's needs. The thing which Philip did was to evangelize; the thing which the early church did was to evangelize; the thing a progressive church anywhere will always do is to evangelize. The church must expound with ever-adaptable clarity God's revelation to man in Jesus Christ. O, that the world might know him!

Would I know him, if he stood here by my side?
Doth the cruel, cruel nail-prints yet abide?
Would he show me in his beauty so divine,
That in rapture I would feel him to be mine?

Dr. John Balcom Shaw recently said, "I count that day lost in which I have not sought the salvation of some soul." To know, then to preach him, is the crowning privilege of Christians and the eternal power of the church.

LESSON FOR MARCH 14

ÆNEAS AND DORCAS

GOLDEN TEXT: "And Peter said unto him, *Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed.* And he arose immediately."—Acts 9. 34.

BY GEORGE E. MONTROSE

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, COLD SPRING-ON-THE-HUDSON, NEW YORK

IN the text and context we have presented a twofold miracle, that of healing and raising from the dead; all of which is a token of divine power and goodness. We are also given an insight into the character and faith of Peter. This lesson reveals him on a tour among the churches of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria for the purpose of strengthening the believers. As he comes to Lydda, a small but important city lying nine miles east of Joppa, he finds there a certain man named *Æneas*, whether a convert or not we do not know, but one sadly in need of help, who for eight long years has been bedridden on account of palsy. He pities him and asks the Lord to heal him.

This is not the first time he has made successful appeal in behalf of suffering humanity. We recall the healing of the lame man at the Temple Gate in Jerusalem, who had asked an alms, and Peter's memorable reply, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." In like manner he said to *Æneas*, "*Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise and make thy bed.* And he arose immediately." As a result of this miracle we are told that all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord.

The apostle was to give further proof of his ministry of healing, and his faith was to be put to severer test in

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the case of Tabitha, who dwelt at Joppa by the sea. We learn from the context that this one, so full of good deeds, was taken ill and died, and that her many friends, learning of the apostle's presence at Lydda, sent two of their number to him, asking him to come to them. Peter goes with the messengers to Joppa, and into the presence of the weeping throng. Then putting them forth he kneels down beside the silent form and prays to Him who has power over death. Having received assurance that his prayer is heard, he said, "Tabitha, arise," and the spirit came to her and she arose and stood before them.

All this teaching is full of meaning, and suggests to us many practical and valuable lessons.

1. *The paralytic of the text reveals a present-day condition and need.* Here is a picture of sin, the great paralyzer of humanity. How it lays hold on the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual powers of men, weakens them, yea, destroys them! As this man was helpless and hopeless in the grasp of this dread disease, so is man powerless in the grasp of sin, the great destroyer. It palsies the king upon his throne and the beggar in the street. As an insidious foe it carries on its deadly work among all classes of society, marring the fair image of purity and love in which man was created.

The condition suggests the need of healing. It was this fact which so strongly appealed to the apostle. Here was a fellow mortal in distress and he resolved to help him. He did the very best possible thing for him in offering prayer in his behalf, in asking the Lord to heal him. The result was a splendid vindication of Peter's faith, as well as a proof of the efficacy of earnest prayer. Peter's solicitude for the sufferer, which has found expression in many earnest hearts since, but dimly portrays the feeling which enters the heart of the loving Christ as he looks out upon a sin-cursed world and realizes in all its fullness the distress and need of

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the human family. It was this full knowledge of man's condition and need that led him to tread the paths of earth, that he might by his labor and sacrifice prove his love for man and the efficacy of his blood to heal. Hence,

2. *The panacea for all the ills of life is found in Jesus Christ.* Peter made it very emphatic that the healing was not from him. He said to Æneas, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole"; wherein he acknowledged the only means by which man can be healed, physically or spiritually.

Jesus, thou Source divine,
Whence hope and comfort flow!
Jesus, no other name than thine
Can save from endless woe.

None else will Heaven approve:
Thou art the only way,
Ordained by everlasting love,
To realms of endless day.

He is "the balm in Gilead," the Great Physician. He knows our case and applies the remedy for our healing.

The Bible is very explicit in its statement that the only and all-sufficient remedy for the world's sin and need is found in Him who came "to seek and to save that which was lost." "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He who can command the tempest and speak peace to the stormy sea, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, he alone can command the waves of sin to cease and heal the wounded heart.

3. *We may learn from this subject the need of self-effort.* The paralytic was commanded to rise and make his bed and thus demonstrate his cure and show to those about him, as Mathew Henry forcefully says, "that his bed was no longer to be a bed of sickness but a bed of rest." It goes without saying that he was anxious to be healed and was willing to do his part in the matter. But he had to make the effort. When

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Christ healed the man at the Pool of Bethesda he said to him, "Wilt thou" (or, willest thou) "be made whole?" which very clearly placed the responsibility on him, and when he showed his willingness to do his part the Lord healed him. A great many are not healed because they are not willing to be healed. There is no help for such people. Christ wept over Jerusalem because they would not come to him, and he knew that his tears and sacrifice were in vain in their behalf. We can almost hear his heart cry, "O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered you, but ye would not!" Along with this man's effort came power to rise, and it is always so. Wherein we lack ability to do, the Lord will perform. Tabitha was dead and could not rise until her spirit came again, but when that returned to her and she had the power to act she rose up in obedience to the apostle's command. If men are not saved it is because they are unwilling to make the proper effort. God provides the remedy, and the responsibility is with man to avail himself of it.

There is hope for the most hopeless and help for the most helpless who have desire and willingness to be free from sin and its power. To all such is the promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." To such the divine hand is outreached and he lifts them up from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. He turns blindness to sight, sorrow to joy, the path of trouble into the pathway of peace. "He makes the branches of life to lift their golden fruit into the bloom of heaven." Such is the blessing that comes to those who are willing to hear and obey the divine voice, Arise, go forth and serve.

4. *This lesson further teaches that true conversion leaves no doubt.* In both instances before us the evidence of healing was so conclusive that there could be no shadow of doubt in the mind of any as to the genuineness of the cure. Here was one who had not

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left his bed for eight years, and who had been a great sufferer all this time, fully restored and walking about as others; the other brought back from the dead and resuming her former activities and labor of love. Herein is an object lesson for the individual and the church. If we have been healed let us give evidence of the fact. Let there be no doubt in our own mind or in the minds of others as to the thoroughness of the change which has come into our life. Is it not too sadly true that ofttimes we fail to give evidence of healing and allow the bed of sin to remain so that we may occupy it in case of relapse? Like Napoleon, we should "burn the bridges behind us" and not allow for return to old conditions. In this day of worldliness, indifference, and enticement we need to guard ourselves well lest we fail in measuring up to the duties and privileges of life and in maintaining that standard of Christian health and experience which our Lord has set before us. There is need of more positiveness in our Christianity to-day—a deeper earnestness on the part of all who profess to love Christ and his church. The present-day tendency is to forget the Healer and go out to mingle with the worldly throng, and herein we are like the nine lepers who were cleansed and went away failing to give thanks to him who had healed them. The rebuke of Christ would fittingly apply in this day: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" The only way to maintain the strength we have received is to use it. The only way to dispel doubt as to our discipleship is to live as becometh true disciples.

5. *We see also the power of influence.* The healing act of the apostle, made possible through a godly, Spirit-filled life, had marvelous influence on the people of Lydda and Saron—so much so "that all turned to the Lord." His influence had been felt on other occasions, as in Acts 4, where we are told that all men glorified God for that which was done in the healing of the lame man, and even his enemies acknowledged that he had

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been with Jesus. Also in Acts 5, where we learn that the people brought the sick into the streets that Peter's shadow falling on them might heal them.

Tabitha, or Dorcas, presents to us another picture of influence. Her very name suggests it. Tabitha, or Dorcas, means *gazelle*, which among the Orientals stood for the very highest type of beauty and suggests to us that here was a woman who not only had beauty of features but, above all, beauty of character. The lesson gives us insight into the latter, where it refers to her as a "woman full of good works and almsdeeds which she did," and further in the large number that wept over her and with one accord declared to the apostle her loving ministry in showing the coats and garments she had made. Not only were these influences felt then and had effect in molding many lives for good, but they have come down to us as an inspiration and wholesome example of what one can do when consecrated to the Lord's work.

While we learn from these notable examples the lesson of good influence, we are not to forget that opposite character and life wield an opposite influence. We should make sure that the trend of our life is in the proper direction, so that we may be an inspiration for good while here, and may still touch other lives when our life's work is ended, leading them on to the goal of peace.

LESSON FOR MARCH 21

EVEN TO JAPAN

GOLDEN TEXT: "They that were scattered [sent] abroad went everywhere preaching the word"—even to Japan.—
Acts 8. 4.

BY JULIUS SOPER, D.D.

DEAN OF PHILANDER SMITH BIBLICAL INSTITUTE
AOYAMA, TOKYO, JAPAN

THE first Protestant missionaries reached Japan in 1859. Until 1869, however, the number was very small. In this latter year the missionary force was considerably enlarged; but 1873 marks the beginning of the rapid increase of missionaries to this newly opened country. The long-seated opposition to Christianity began to die away in 1872. In that year the last Christians (largely Roman Catholics) arrested and put in prison for their faith were released. This closed the open persecution of Christians in Japan. The new Constitution, promulgated in 1889, guarantees freedom of religious faith to all Japanese subjects. This is one of the most remarkable incidents in the modern progress of Japan.

When five missionaries (Revs. R. S. Maclay, J. C. Davison, M. C. Harris, I. H. Correll, and Julius Soper) and their families, the vanguard of Methodist Episcopal workers in Japan, arrived in 1873, there were not over one hundred and fifty Protestant Christians in the whole empire. Now there are over sixty thousand, not including adherents, baptized children, and Sunday school scholars. Some time ago, when a prominent Japanese minister of the Congregational Church was asked how many Japanese he thought were influenced directly and indirectly by the teachings of the Christian religion, he answered: "So far as I may venture an opinion, basing it on personal knowledge and observation, I should say at least a million." The fact is, the

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ethical teachings of the Bible, in substance if not in form, are fast becoming the moral standard of judging human action, even in Japan.

While the rising generation in Japan are being educated out of the old idolatries and superstitions, and while a large number of the people, young and old, have become Christian, and a still larger number has become imbued with the Christian spirit, many among the higher and educated classes have become agnostic and materialistic, largely influenced by the rationalistic teachings of the Occident. The Japanese mind from the far-distant past has been pantheistic, if not atheistic. Buddhism as a philosophical system is atheistic—an endless chain of “cause and effect,” with no Creator or First Great Cause. The Hindu religion is a spiritualistic pantheism—only the “unseen,” some invisible force or power, is real; the Japanese religion is a materialistic pantheism—only the “seen,” the phenomena of nature, is real. Hence it is readily seen how easy it is for the Japanese mind to accept the rationalistic teachings of the West. And, sad to say, such teachings are spread broadcast over the land. Even Buddhists have caught the same spirit. They are loudly proclaiming that the fundamental principles of their system are nothing more nor less than the evolution theories of the West.

The great contest of Christian workers in Japan, then, is not so much with Shintoism (a naturalistic and hero-worship cult), or Buddhism or Confucianism, as with agnosticism and materialism. It is theism *versus* atheism; spiritualism (in its higher and better sense) *versus* materialism. This is the conflict now going on in Japan, as in no other country in the world.

Two of the most difficult things for the average Japanese mind to grasp are the eternal existence of a *personal* God and the *personal* immortality of the human soul. The Japanese are of an inquisitive turn of mind, always anxious to know things, and all the while are

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becoming more and more intelligent. But they want to know the "why" and "wherefore" of things—things religious, as well as things political and scientific. They fairly bristle with interrogation points. We must be able to give a reasonable account of the faith and hope within us. All this simply indicates the line of battle in religious matters and the great objective of missionary effort, in Japan. The real religious contest in Japan is *intellectual*. It is a gigantic struggle, but we have faith in its ultimate outcome.

All the outside countries of the Orient are looking to Japan, and watching her movements and developments. A large number of students from China, reaching into the thousands, and not a few from Korea, Siam, and India, are now studying in Japan. The next fifty years will largely decide the religious, as well as the political, future of these Oriental lands. As Japan goes, so in a large degree will these other lands go. Capture Japan for Christ, and we have gone a long way toward capturing the Orient.

While there are many obstacles to the spread of the Christian faith in Japan—Buddhism, Agnosticism, and Materialism, not to speak of the sinful practices and sinful lives often observable in high as well as low places, and of the corrupting example and disgraceful conduct of hundreds of Europeans and Americans living in Japan—in spite of all these, God has not left himself without witness. There still remains a sense of sin and human frailty among the people, and often and anon the more serious and more thoughtful ask themselves these questions: What am I? Why am I here? Whence came I? Whither go I? These old questions will not down. The system that gives the most intelligent and most satisfactory solution to these old questions, and at the same time produces the purest and happiest lives, as well as the noblest characters, will win in this great moral and religious conflict, *the conflict of the ages*.

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One of the leading Christian workers in Japan, Bishop Y. Honda, once said, the Scripture that first stirred him, and most deeply interested him, after he began studying the Bible (thirty-eight years ago), was the first verse of Genesis: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." A flood of light came into his soul as he studied this and similar passages. He, like many others in Japan, had often felt there must be some adequate cause and reason of things. Then, as he studied the gospel narratives, the unique life, the noble character, and the sublime teachings of Jesus Christ won his heart and captivated his mind. Thus the Bible, when faithfully and intelligently presented, and honestly and seriously studied, becomes its own interpreter and its own vindicator. Already the large number of Japanese who have accepted the Christian faith is a pledge of future victories and successes—all showing the possibilities of divine grace working in human hearts, in Japan as elsewhere. Christ "the Light of the world" is the *great* hope—the only soul-satisfying hope—of the Japanese, as well as of other peoples of the world.

There is a bright and glorious future for Japan if she will accept the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, and make the ethical teachings of the Bible the moral basis of her educational system. Japan must sooner or later adopt some definite ethical code. This was emphasized in a late deliverance of the Minister of Education. Without any invidious comparison—comparisons are often odious—and without fear of contradiction, I make the following assertion: If in the next fifty years the Japanese become as ethical as they are æsthetic, as honest as they are polite, and as virtuous as they are chivalrous, they will not be surpassed by any people in the wide, wide world. And, I add, if we of the West will offer to China and Japan the right hand of friendship and fellowship, honestly helping them in their efforts at progress and civilization,

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we shall never have reason to fear the so-called "yellow peril." The future of the East lies largely in the hands of the West. If we deal justly and magnanimously with these Oriental peoples, especially China and Japan, they will not only become our fast friends, but they will become our generous rivals as champions of the highest ideals and as leaders of the most advanced movements of the human race, thus coöperating with us in lifting humanity from idolatry, ignorance, and degradation to the highest levels of true manhood, so beautifully set forth in the life, character, and teachings of the divine-human Christ.

It is only thirty-five years since the first missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church began work in Japan. During this time two Annual Conferences—with about seventy-five Japanese members—have been organized; and just one year ago the three Japanese missions, of the Canada Methodist Church, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with the approval of their several General Conferences, were united and organized into one Church.

The missionaries were the first to urge this movement over twenty years ago, their object being to do away with a divided Methodism in so small a country as Japan, and thus help to reduce the number of Protestant sects to the "irreducible minimum." The Japanese Methodists of these three churches, after the wars with China and Russia, took up this matter and became most earnest in working for the union of Methodism in Japan, and that for *three* reasons: the needless waste of time and energy in a divided Methodism; the fact that the Congregational mission, the six Presbyterian missions, and the three Episcopal missions, working in Japan, had each severally organized independent churches; and the strong nationalistic spirit prevalent in all circles of society. It was a crisis in Japanese Methodism. Had the Methodist bodies failed to unite at

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this critical time, the future would have been anything but bright and promising. The Japanese in thus following the initiative of the missionaries did so not because they personally desired to separate from the mother churches—it was painful to many of them—but because a necessity, as they believed, was laid upon them, in order to conserve the fruits of the past to Methodism, and to secure a proper recognition and standing among the other Christian bodies in Japan, as well as in the nation at large, and thus make it possible for sure, permanent, and rapidly increasing success in the future. In this new church there are nearly fourteen thousand members, not including a large number of adherents, hundreds of baptized children, and thousands of Sunday school scholars.

This movement is a new experiment in Methodism. Ten or fifteen years will test its wisdom. It is worthy of fair trial. The three churches entering into this new movement have a grand opportunity and nothing, as it seems to many of the missionaries in Japan and many of their friends, home and abroad, should so awaken a thrill of Christian joy and churchly pride in the hearts of the ministry and laity of these three churches as this new movement. To see one of their own mission fields, in one generation, blossoming into full and vigorous churchhood and struggling to reach self-support, should fill their hearts with praise and thanksgiving to God, and incite them to stand bravely by this new branch of Methodism, giving it all reasonable support for at least fifteen years. All three of these churches should daily send to heaven united and earnest prayers for the success of this unparalleled movement in the history of Methodist missions. In this new movement we begin to see daylight in modern missionary enterprise and the first fruits of modern missionary effort. How welcome would be the news of similar movements in the other mission fields of the church! Hasten, O Lord, that glorious day!

LESSON FOR MARCH 28

THE INEVITABLE CURSE

GOLDEN TEXT: "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."—Prov. 23. 32.

BY JAMES A. STAVELY, A.M.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT ATCHISON DISTRICT, KANSAS
CONFERENCE, ATCHISON, KANSAS

THIS text has in it the suggestion of one fact and the affirmation of another. The suggestion is that the promises of wine, like all the promises of sin, are very fair. The affirmation gives the lie to these smooth words. The exhilaration of the cup is but the adder's sting. The spur to hope and joy that is in the wine is but the sinking of the serpent's fangs deep into the quivering flesh. The figure is clear enough, and needs no explanation. The sweet, delicious draught has poison in it. Whatever joy the drunkard finds will surely turn to bitterness of woe.

I. *The Fair Promises of Wine.* The wine cup is Satan's answer to a vital need of human life. It has in it exhilaration and convivial joy. Were this not so, the warning of the text were needless. But deception is the archfiend's chief stock in trade. He does not tell it all. A widely displayed advertisement portrays the joy of yachting on a summer sea as descriptive of the charm of a certain brand of liquor. As the fair pilot and her companion skim swiftly over the dashing waves, they hold aloft brimming beakers and declare this drink to be "refreshing as ocean spray." That is Satan's way. He is shrewd enough to hide the hook with an alluring bait. He conceals the end, while the entrance to the path of vice is garlanded with flowers. He seeks to drown reason in the convivial joys of the flowing bowl.

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O Willie brewed a peck of maut,
And Rob and Allan came to pree;
Three blither hearts that lee lang nicht
Ye wadna found in Christendie.

While under the spell of these convivial hours the victim never sees the serpent coiled to strike, nor heeds its poisonous sting.

The deadliest power of wine is exerted where the awful marks of sin are gilded over, and the youth sees nothing to appall. He is a guest at a public function where dignitaries and conventionally decent people give ready sanction to drinking customs. Why should he abstain? He is invited to a luxuriously appointed club, where Christian men have membership. There he learns to be drunken in a gentlemanly way. He is entertained at a social fête, and dainty, jeweled hands extend to him the sparkling cup. He feels himself in paradise! Or it may be only the fashionable saloon. But its elegant appointments, brilliant lights, and fascinating music hold him with a powerful grip. Is it any wonder that the innocent are deceived, and unwary wanderers are caught?

But the text uncovers for us the tragedy that marks the end. The mask is torn from Satan's face that we may see him as he is. The ruddy wine may glow, and as it gives its color in the cup may tinge the future with its roseate hue. But, young man, beware! Look not thou upon the wine, *for at the last* it brings forth naught but bitterness and death. Before you yield to the allurements of the cup, consider well the tragedy its hidden depths conceal.

II. *The Final Outcome of Wine-Drinking.* We know the dangers of unbridled speech. But our boys are deceived by the wine cup's potent charm, and it will take more than a table of statistics to break the spell. We do need formal statement of the facts. But that statement, to be effective, must glow with the fire of a heart that is hot with love for men.

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First note the present tense of the drunkard's woe. For one brief moment there is exhilarating pleasure, then hours of sad depression. But the victim knows no other easing of his pain, and therefore cries, "I will seek it yet again." And so it goes: a few days of buoyant sowing to the wind, before the years of suffering in which to reap the fury of the whirlwind. Yet even these days of exhilarating joy are not filled with unmixed pleasure. The Scripture context itemizes the present gain of those who tarry at the wine: woe, sorrow, groundless quarrels, constant complainings, needless wounds, redness of eyes. All these are found in the immediate present of the wine cup's highest good.

But there is something more beyond. In the later stages of the drunkard's journey he plunges more and more deeply into misery. Here are found the wreck of manhood, the defeat of all life's holy ends, and the final forfeiture of all that love holds dear. Notice now more closely the things which he who walks this way will surely find:

1. *Physical bankruptcy.* Dr. C. L. Dana is credited with saying, while president of the New York Academy of Medicine, that "a real drunkard rarely survives fifteen years, and the human organism cannot outlive more than three thousand intoxications." The English army had a striking test of physical endurance when it marched to the relief of Ladysmith. Sir Frederick Treves, the eminent surgeon, was there, and he says: "The first who dropped out were not the tall men, nor the short men, nor the big men, nor the little men—but the drinkers. And they dropped out as clearly as if they had been labeled with a big letter on their backs." But that fresh-made mound yonder speaks to me more strongly than all other witnesses. There lies the body of my friend. A few years ago, in stalwart strength, he was the pride and stay of his widowed mother's life. But he yielded to the wine cup's subtle charm, and to-day he sleeps—killed by drink!

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2. *Mental imbecility.* Clear-headed Dennis J. Swenie, for years chief of the Chicago Fire Department, thus stated once his reason for practicing total abstinence: "I never know when I may be summoned to exercise my clearest judgment in order to prevent a serious loss of life and property. I never could forgive myself if at such a time I should make a mistake, and had the least reason for thinking that my mental powers had been in some degree impaired through the influence of alcohol." It is Theodore Roosevelt who says: "There is not a thought in a hogshead of beer. Nothing of merit was ever written under the inspiration of lager beer. It stupefies, and its effect on the brain is to stagnate thought." Impairment of the mental powers is always the result of drinking. And anyone of wide acquaintance can count many men who through long indulgence have gone down to imbecility.

3. *Business failure.* Every young man hopes to succeed. But the drink habit is a hopeless handicap. Why? Because it robs him of his mind. In *The Empire of Business*, Carnegie writes: "You are more likely to fail in your career from acquiring the habit of drinking liquor than from any other temptations likely to assail you." The Hon. George W. Martin, secretary of the State Historical Society of Kansas, states this truth in specific terms. He tells of his former home, a town of rare business opportunity but in which are "more wrecked fortunes and a greater number of men reduced from comfortable circumstances, in proportion to population, than in any other town in Kansas." "I can name a dozen men," he writes, "who from the business they did ought each to have from twenty-five to one hundred thousand dollars in bank, who to-day are penniless and scattered." And this he charges to the drinking clubs—"convivial agencies of the devil," which "have sent so many good and useful men to ruin and to hell."

4. *Moral defeat.* To fail here is to be completely

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vanquished. And right here is where the wine cup does its deadliest work. There is not one grace of character that flourishes in the soil of drunkenness. Deception, outright lying, dishonesty, theft, treachery, unspeakable brutality, murder—these are samples of the fruit that grows on the tree of indulgence. Listen again to Mr. Martin: “Such convivialities [of the club-room] before now have turned lots of as good men as you are into thieves and murderers. It has made men who love their wives as dearly as you love yours go home and beat them. This, of course, is incredible, but the fact that it has done so still remains.” There are no greater depths of shameless immorality than those to which the devotees of drink are brought.

5. *Love's ruin* is another item of the drunkard's loss. We have no gauge to measure how much abuse a loyal wife is able to endure, and still keep love alive. But we have ample proof that love—*true* love—does thus die. Listen to this cry wrung from a heart in untold agony. “I used to love him so! But”—and her voice broke in a dry convulsive sob—“when I see him lying like a beast there on the floor where his boon friends, who brought him home, have laid him, all the love is gone, and I just hate him!” There is no sadder cry than that.

6. *The soul's remorse*. We read again from actual life: Here dwelt a woman of such high qualities of mind and heart that her presence made a home, and that home a heaven. Here also was a child, the pledge of love. Here, too, dwelt a man—husband and father—of Christian parentage, of intellectual gifts, and standing in the strength of youth on the very threshold of success. The story cannot all be told. The demon drink possessed the man. Neither love of wife nor love of child could stay the fury of his mood. The loyal wife still clung to hope. But driven, at last, by cruelty her frail body could no longer bear, she fled—but chiefly for the dear child's sake—to the refuge of another home. Then

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remorse clutched the husband by the throat and leered into his sodden eyes; while the fires of hell like tongues of liquid flame licked up his blood. Alone among the strangers of a strange city, in midnight darkness, driven by remorse, by his own hand, he took his life!

7. *Eternal death.* The way of life from early youth to latest age is strewn with wrecks of men ruined by indulgence in the inebriating cup. We see them now on every hand, as, bruised and bleeding at the hands of sin, they suffer woe themselves and grieve unspeakably the hearts of those who love them. But beyond our vision —what? *At the last* is there not hope for these poor, battered wrecks of men? Their lives on earth are lost, but what of the hereafter? Many hope for an escape from woe at death. But listen! “Be not deceived! * * * No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Dr. Watkinson thus illustrates the fate of those who trust in a false hope of liberty: “In the castle of Chillon, on the Lake of Geneva, is a dungeon containing a well at the bottom of which you discern the waters of the lake. Tradition says that in the old days the perfidious jailer in the darkness of the dungeon would whisper to the prisoner, ‘Three steps and liberty,’ and the poor dupe, hastily stepping forward, fell down this shaft thickly planted with knives and spikes: the mutilated, bloody corpse dropping into the lake.” That precisely shows the end of drunkenness. In the dark dungeon, Habit, the demon jailer, Drink, opens the door and falsely whispers to his victim, “Three steps and liberty.” Forward he plunges only to fall down the shaft of death to the lake below. Alas! Alas!

There is but one ray of hope. It comes from Calvary’s cross. Let him who will but turn to Christ and he shall be delivered from the drunkard’s present woe, and from the fatal plunge that awaits him at the last. Or, better yet, reject wine’s wooing from the first and walk with Jesus all the way. That is the path to peace.

LESSON FOR APRIL 4

PETER AND CORNELIUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."—Acts. 10. 35.

BY W. H. LINDEMUTH, A.M.

PASTOR FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
POTTSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

IT was a saying of a wise old Sute that, "One is born a Pagan, another a Jew, a third a Mussulman. The true philosopher sees in each a seeker after God." Every man, whatever his race, education, or creed, who reverences God, and shows his allegiance by right doing, according to his light, is accepted of him. It was a thrilling moment for Peter when he learned that lesson. It was a glad hour for Cornelius when he found that his prayers and alms had come up before God for a memorial. In the conversion of Cornelius, and the enlightenment of Peter, we see Christianity's broad-mindedness in contrast with the superstitious narrowness of Judaism. God's purposes of salvation are larger than men have ever yet conceived. "The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind." The motto of eternal love is, "The world for Christ and Christ for the whole world." The universal supremacy of Jesus has for its corollary the universal destination of the gospel.

1. The text is one which requires some exposition before it can be rightly understood.

The narrative gives the interpretation. In it two men figure as representative characters. The one is an apostle, born and bred a Jew, bound by the superstition that the Jewish nation had a monopoly of salvation. As it was unlawful for a Jew to associate with, or have anything to do with, one of any other nation,

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Peter was slow to believe that as a Christian he must acknowledge those outside of the household of the faith. He represents national and religious exclusiveness. The other is a Gentile, a Pagan, a military captain brought up in the superstition of the Pantheon. He was a Roman, of that nation who despised the Jews as a conquered people, but in heart he was a seeker after God, needing clearer light and better knowledge, in the absence of which he adhered devoutly to the truth he had. Before Peter knew him he had been known as a man of prayer and charity, accepted of God. In a vision he is commanded to send for Peter to get a more adequate knowledge of the way of life. By divine leading the typical Jew, the hard-shelled Jew, and the God-fearing Gentile come together, just as two carbons in the arc-light, and the result is new light, new confessions of brotherhood, new experiences of salvation, new conceptions of the universality of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Now, Peter sees that salvation is not a matter which is limited to race or condition, but the gift of God to all men. "God is no respecter of persons." That is, God makes no differences between men, with reference to accepting them, on such grounds of nationality. The inward state, not the outward condition, is the matter of all importance. The question which recent events had solved in the mind of Peter was the admissibility of men of all nations into the church, and that henceforth Jew and Gentile stood on a common level before the universal Father—a truth which is the Magna Charta of humanity.

All differences and distinctions are artificial and accidental. God made of one blood all men to dwell together on the face of the earth. Before him there is no difference in the moral standing of men, no difference in their relation to him in respect of his purpose and grace.

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Jesus struck the universal note when he declared, "Other sheep have I which are not of this fold." He had sheep that were not sheltered by the Theocracy, Gentiles, earnest souls of every nation, and, though they may not yet have heard his voice, they are his sheep. They will hear his voice. Eternal love is seeking them. "I am the door of the sheep." Mark you, not the "door" of the fold—that was too exclusive—but the "door of the sheep." Christ is the Shepherd of mankind. It is a common shepherd which makes the sheep of one fold. In the Christian scheme the basis of the new fellowship is divine—one Shepherd makes one flock of God.

The great declaration of the text must not be pressed beyond its meaning, as when it is made to teach that all religions are alike in God's sight, or that the heathen's natural light and moral purity would render him acceptable in the sight of God, or that the heathen will be saved without the gospel, or as a shelter for the irreligious who willfully reject the duties and obligations of Christianity, arguing that if they fear God and work righteousness they shall finally be acceptable to him.

The note of this scripture is that of the Liberty Bell, ringing out the tyranny of national and religious exclusiveness, and ringing in the gospel of universal salvation for all who fear God and work righteousness.

2. The universal brotherhood of man lay hid in this new conception.

In Peter's day exclusiveness and class hatred were not confined to the Jew who so despised the Samaritan that on the way to and from the religious feasts at Jerusalem he would twice cross the Jordan and travel along its eastern shore rather than pass through Samaria. The Roman looked on all, except the nations bound to him by treaties, as without rights, and had no more scruple in robbing or killing them than in slaying wild animals. The barbarian in his eyes was no more

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than a wolf or a dog, and to claim brotherhood for him with a Roman was simply ridiculous. From their philosophic height the Greeks looked down upon all the rest of the world as barbarians.

It was in such an age of national hatred that Jesus began to preach the doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man; it was then that the apostles, going into all the world with the new gospel, met the fierce race hostilities with the high doctrines of the unity of the race by creation, and its more blessed unity by redemption, looking to the bringing in of “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues.”

In the Lord’s Prayer that little word “Our” gives the death-blow to all selfish exclusiveness. It means that the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man must go together. Before we can have God for our Father we must be willing to have all men for our brethren. That sweeps away all lines of exclusion, so that in Christ’s tuition there is “neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female,” but one brotherhood of mutual helpfulness, of mutual love, one brotherhood of man depending on the Fatherhood of God.

Before the coming of Christ the poets, philosophers, and prophets dreamed of a universal brotherhood, but it had never yet been realized. The thought had existed in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world. It had a place in the Stoic philosophy, it had been wrought into Roman imperial legislation as oneness of creed and mode of worship, but it was impossible to work the idea of a true brotherhood into the minds and hearts of men when selfish individualism ruled the world. Every man worked and prayed for himself alone. The strong trampled down the weak. Feuds and cruelties were universal. The world was filled with armies, with masters, with slaves, with despots, and the most sacred ties of humanity were disregarded.

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A prayer from the Welsh expresses the sentiment of universal love as emphasized by Jesus:

Grant, O God, thy favor;
And with thy favor strength;
And with thy strength wisdom;
And with thy wisdom knowledge;
And with thy knowledge, knowledge of the just;
And with knowledge of the just, love;
And with love, love for every being;
And with love for every being, love for you,
God, and all good.

“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.” And that is a good deal of a truth to perceive. There are many Christians who do not perceive it to-day. It is not quite clear to them that God does not, somehow, have more regard for a native-born white American citizen than for a poor and illiterate negro, or a painted wild Indian, or a yellow-faced Chinaman. Nevertheless God actually looks at each individual solely in the light of his character and spirit. All who “fear God and work righteousness are accepted with him.”

3. God has an “unhistorical discipleship,” souls acceptable to him in every nation.

Cornelius was a pagan, and yet he did the will of God as far as he knew it, and earnestly desired to know more. Then he obeyed God’s direction how to gain more. He was a soul acceptable to God, accepted through Christ, though he knew him not. Such a view enables us to believe that the heathen, bowing down before idols, vainly seeking the truth, aspiring, hoping, despairing, is advancing toward salvation.

Look at the story of Joseph Neesima, the Japanese boy. He was born and brought up in the midst of heathendom, and had never heard of anything but the idolatry of his ancestors. At fourteen years of age he observed that the gods in his father’s house did not eat the food that was daily prepared for them. This made him doubt that they were really gods, and from that

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time he refused to worship them. As yet he knew nothing of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. But presently he came across a Bible in Chinese, and made up his mind that the God revealed there as the Creator of the world was the true God. His soul began to seek that God, and, though his steps forward were in the shadows of heathen ignorance, he began to reverence God and work righteousness, till he came at last into the fullness of the truth. It was he who became the founder of the "Doshisha," a Christian university in Japan.

In every nation God has had these "outside saints," men who have hungered and thirsted for the "true light" that lighteth every man who cometh into the world. Whether such a disciple be a Socrates or a Plato, a Cyrus or a Marcus Aurelius, a Gautama or an Epictetus, a Rahab or a North American Indian, God's supreme touchstone for them is this: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The converse is equally true: "If any man have the Spirit of Christ, if he fears God and worketh righteousness, he is acceptable to him."

No longer can we paint the pagan world in black, without one sunbeam in all the picture. By a study of comparative religions we see that the heathen world is dark, but not totally dark. There are rays of light; there are twinkling stars. The old religions are inadequate. Christianity is the complement of them all. Jesus is the Light of the World.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee;
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

LESSON FOR APRIL 11

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON

GOLDEN TEXT: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them."—Psa. 34. 7.

BY ROBERT T. CHIPPERFIELD, A.M.

PASTOR WHITEFIELD METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
SIOUX CITY, IOWA

THE selection of this scripture as the Golden Text for the lesson on Peter's deliverance from prison is admirable. Few texts are so fraught with comfort for distressed Christians as is this one. This metaphor, briefly expressed in one verse, gives the philosophy of the Christian's safe-keeping even in the midst of untoward and uncontrollable surroundings. And what Christian does not at some time find himself under such circumstances?

"The angel of the Lord." The angels have scant consideration in this generation. As a dependable source of relief they are generally discredited. Angelic intervention in times of distress is the last source of expectancy even with many of God's followers. And indeed, if we interpret this lesson correctly, both Peter and his friends were surprised at this instance of angelic deliverance. Peter questioned with himself if he were not beholding a vision only; and they who were gathered together praying for his deliverance had difficulty in believing their senses when Peter appeared.

Much of the uncertainty and distrust respecting the angels arises from the loose meaning attached to the word "angels." The hair-splitting speculations of the Schoolmen and the grotesque conceptions of artists have also disgusted many. The word has not always been used with a single meaning even in the Scriptures. Sometimes it is used of men. Ordinarily, how-

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ever, it refers to an order of spiritual beings attendant upon the Deity. It is sometimes applied now to one who approaches the ideal of human perfection, and also to the glorified spirit of a deceased person. Frequently the expression “the angel of the Lord” is employed where it is evident that Jehovah himself was manifested, as when he appeared to Moses at Midian and declared, “I am the God of thy father”; and also, “the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, Lift up the lad; for I will make him a great nation.” Such instances show clearly that the angel of the Lord is a theophany, a self-manifestation of God. Isaiah also declares, “the angel of his presence saved them.” It was by such a manifestation as this also that the Lord quelled the fears of Moses and nerved him for his great labor, saying, “My presence shall go with thee.”

Without contending that the word “angels” is restricted to this sense only, how evident it is that all Christians may and do believe in this form of angelic manifestation. Such a ministration answers to the deepest cravings of the soul and is perfectly consonant with the teachings of the Saviour. He taught his followers to expect a manifestation of God in their lives. “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” While this manifestation is to be spiritual rather than optical, yet it answers every purpose of the soul. “The angel of his presence,” who appeared to Abraham, who encouraged Hagar, who taught Moses, who vouchsafed a revelation to Jacob, who strengthened the Saviour in Gethsemane, and who encampeth round them that fear him, is the same Presence which Jesus taught should abide with those that love him.

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The similarity of this teaching is further manifested in the terms employed, "encampeth round about" and "make our abode," both of which phrases have a similarity of meaning. "Encampeth" conveys the idea of a continued custom of habitation, which is also the most obvious meaning of "abode." This interpretation also relieves the text of a difficulty which has been suggested, namely, How is it possible for one angel to encamp "round about"? Whatever explanation may be offered by other interpretations, this remains true, that the Lord's presence is sufficient to encamp round about all his followers. An eastern traveler describing a Turkish encampment, having particularly noticed the spaciousness and conveniences of the Bashaw's pavilion, adds, "Round the pale of his tent, within a pistol shot, were above two hundred tents, pitched in such a manner that the doors of them all looked toward the Bashaw's tent: and it is always so, that they may have their eye always upon their master's lodging and be in readiness to assist him if he be attacked." In similar manner "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him."

The purpose of this encampment is set forth in the phrase, "and delivereth them." Such a statement implies troubrous conditions, and for that very reason is appreciated by those who serve God. However deep may be the peace within, there are always troubles without sufficient to make a deliverance highly desirable. Peter's godly life was a rebuke to the wicked Herod. For this reason Herod sought to dispose of him as he had already done with James. Peter had peace in the midst of his incarceration, and we may well fancy that his outward surroundings contrasted strongly with his inward peace of mind. "Nevertheless, prayer was made without ceasing for him." That statement opens to us the secret of influence with the delivering angel. We are not delivered by some blind force that can by no means sympathize or be touched

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with the pathos of our surroundings. Nor is our condition in the least mitigated by ignoring or denying the reality of our surroundings. The prison was real. The four quaternions of soldiers were real men. The danger to Peter's life was a real danger, not a fancied one. The iron grates and bars which held him were real, not imaginary ones. The two chains with which he was bound were real iron chains that clanked when handled. The keepers that guarded the prison doors were real men and were often changed that no weariness might overcome them. Surely this was no fictitious case. If the delivering angel comes, he likewise must be a real deliverer, able to cope with hard conditions and facts the most formidable. Nevertheless the angel of the Lord hesitated not to attempt the task. He woke Peter. The chains fell off his hands. Yet withal there was no haste. There was no conflict with the soldiers. Peter took time to gird himself, bind on his sandals, and put on his coat. They passed the guards, both the first and the second, none attempting to prevent them. They came to the iron gate that led into the city, and it swung heavily on its hinges of its own accord. They passed through one street and the angel departed. Peter repaired to the house of John Mark, where the church was gathered in prayer for his release, testified to his deliverance, and departed. Never was there a case of distress beset with greater difficulties than Peter's, yet the angel's reputation as a deliverer suffered nothing, but was rather enhanced by them.

Does some one say that this was an isolated case performed with a view to encouraging the faith of the early church? Such doubtless was the effect upon the early church, and its effect is still felt. But other deliverances were had then and are observed to this day. David, in the care of his father's flock, met a lion and a bear and he slew them both. The greatest effect of this deliverance was not the sheep for which he was caring. Nor was it his own personal safety. Years

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passed and a great national issue was on. There was no man to meet the situation; David was dispatched by his father to take food to his brothers and to bring him tidings of the battle. Upon his arrival David was moved at the sight of an uncircumcised Philistine defying the army of Israel. He offered his service to meet the situation. He was reminded of the hazard involved in the effort. His reply was, "When I was tending the sheep there came a lion and a bear and I slew them both, and he that delivered me from the paw of the lion and the bear will also deliver me from this Philistine." Who shall measure the confidence inspired in a heart that feels that his times are in God's hand and that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about him"! He is the man for all high and heroic deeds, and his influence shall increase with the years.

Take yet another instance. Daniel was placed in trying circumstances. He believed in following his God through evil report as well as good. A trap was set for his life. The king proscribed all worship for thirty days except that offered for himself. What should Daniel do? There was no lengthy struggle, for he was determined to serve God according to the dictates of his conscience, come what would. The king's edict went forth. Daniel repaired to his room, and with his windows open toward Jerusalem prayed three times a day, as he was in the habit of doing. This was the occasion which his adversaries sought. He was brought to account, and sentenced according to the law. He was cast into the lion's den, supposedly to his destruction. At early morning the king, after a sleepless night, drew nigh to the lion's den, suspicing that Daniel's God would deliver him, and cried, "O Daniel, is thy God, whom thou servest, able to deliver thee?" A voice from within replied, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." "And no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his

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God.” Where did the angelic deliverance begin or end? Was it manifest in that when he was threatened for his faith he refused to weaken? Was it that when accused he refused to recant? Was it that when sentence was executed his brains were not dashed out as he was thrown into the den of the lions? Was it that when thrown to them they preyed not upon his flesh? Notice the peculiar wording of Daniel’s answer to the king—“hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.” No muzzle was visible on any of the lions, but they had done him no hurt! But the greatest deliverance which the angel wrought for Daniel was not from the lions, but from his adversaries.

But does some one say, “Why not secure deliverance by preventing all these dire distresses upon his children?” Who shall declare how many such deliverances are wrought by the “angel of his presence” daily? We sometimes thank God for “deliverance from dangers seen and unseen.” But who that prays that prayer ever puts into it the fervor of gratitude for deliverance from the unseen dangers which characterizes his praise for deliverance from the known dangers? Who knows but that this day we have been preserved from deadly disease or perilous accident by the angel of the Lord!

The subjects of this preservation are “those that fear him.” Are we interested to ask why these instances of deliverance and preservation are not more frequent? Then let us ask also concerning the prevalency of “those that fear him.” The Lord has as great delight in relieving the distress of his saints to-day as he ever has had in the past. Nor is his arm shortened that he cannot perform his pleasure in behalf of his people. We may well be assured that the helping angels never tire and the arm of our God never wearies in the defense of his children. Let our first concern be to “fear the Lord” and it immediately becomes his concern to “deliver us from evil.” As truly may it be said of us as of his ancient people, “the angel of his presence saved them.”

LESSON FOR APRIL 18

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL

GOLDEN TEXT: "He fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"—
Acts 9. 4.

BY HENRY GRAHAM, D.D.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY OF THE TROY CONFERENCE ACADEMY ENDOWMENT FUND, ALBANY, NEW YORK

CONVERSION is a psychological process. It is a change in the operations of the human mind, under divine influences, which affects intellect, emotions, and will. The converted man will do truer and purer thinking, more rational feeling, and the work of the will will be done in harmony with truth and righteousness. These regenerated mental or spiritual processes cover the primary significance of conversion. There will follow from these mental changes many physical changes also; so that conversion is a transformation of "body, soul, and spirit," or, in more modern phrase, of body and mind.

Minds differ very greatly in their power of execution or resistance. Some minds excel in thinking capacity; others are highly emotional, and still others are almost entirely destitute of feeling. Many persons are exceedingly stubborn, which is only another way of saying that they have a power of will which overrides intellect and feeling. There are many others whose will power is so feeble that they cannot undertake any project and carry it to execution. Some types of mind yield readily to all influences. Emotional minds yield very easily to anything that stirs the feelings. Those who excel in rhetoric can be converted by rhetoric. Those who dig deep for the foundations of things must be overborne by the resistless conclusions of logic. Feeble wills can be easily persuaded to yield to the invitations

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of the gospel, while stubborn persons will admit all that the ambassador of Christ can say, and yet refuse to surrender. Every pastor has discovered that varying influences must be brought to bear on different persons that they may be led to surrender themselves and become disciples of Christ. And the wise pastor is a thorough student of psychology, and learns to reach men by the easiest path of approach.

This passage compels us to study the mental characteristics of Paul, and consider by what path the truths of Christianity could best reach him, and lead to that faith in Christ which is the basis of Christian experience.

Paul was one of the greatest men mentioned in the Bible. He had opinions of his own. He was stubborn in his hold on those opinions. He was absolutely fearless in the maintenance of those opinions, and could use strong language in argument with apostles and rulers.

Paul had not met Christ and come under his matchless influence as had James and Peter and John. We may easily believe that had the great Paul followed Jesus for several years, beholding his mighty works, and listening to his heavenly messages, he would have surrendered his great nature to the sovereignty of the world's Redeemer. But he had been permitted to listen only to the testimony of men inferior to himself, upon whom, with his immovable opinions and prejudices, he could look with nothing short of contempt.

Paul was not a man who could be swept into the kingdom of Christ by rhetoric. And there was not a man among the apostles or early Christians who was a match for him in power of reasoning, or knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. And so he needed to see a light from heaven, and hear the voice of Christ, and look upon his face. In speaking of his conversion he said of Christ, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

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In what form Christ appeared to Paul we do not know; but the hard-headed and hard-hearted persecutor was satisfied that he saw Christ and heard his voice. And one look at the risen Saviour, a few words uttered by the heavenly voice, led the strong and self-sufficient Paul to fall to the earth and cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

With all his prejudice against Christ and his followers, with all his stubborn intellectuality and self-sufficiency, Paul was capable of conversion. We sometimes meet men whose mental characteristics are so peculiar that we are led to doubt if they are capable of that spiritual or mental change which we call conversion. But Paul was capable of the most thorough type of conversion.

From the time when he cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" we see no signs of wavering in his devotion to Christ. His great intellect was satisfied, and a wonderful change took place in his emotional nature. Paul had not by his first birth a strong emotional nature. He was capable of strong resentments, and was not noted for the tenderer passions. But when he saw Christ and became acquainted with him a most marvelous transformation took place in his emotional nature. His love for Christ became something almost unparalleled. This love cast out all fear, so that the great apostle could endure trials and persecutions for his beloved Master which brought him at length to the floor of a Roman dungeon. And concerning his trial he writes sadly to Timothy that all men forsook him; but he adds the significant words, "Nevertheless the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." In that cruel Roman court where his fellow Christians dared not go, the Lord, who met him on the road to Damascus, appeared to him again, and appeared so unmistakably that Paul knew it was Christ who came to his relief. In the midst of his persecutions and sorrows he wrote that he had a desire to depart and to be with Christ,

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which is far better. The love of the great, strong, intellectual Paul for his Lord and Master became something marvelous, and has been an inspiration in all Christian ages to those who have loved and served the same Saviour.

While the conversion of Paul was unique, and he was called to pass through experiences which no other Christian has met, yet the lesson of this discussion is that every conversion is unique. While persons differ, and varying influences and pressure will bring different persons to Christ, yet conversion is a divine work for all, a spiritual change accomplished by divine power; and varying mental characteristics will give peculiarities to each conversion, although the grand result will be the same for all Christians. The conversion of Paul had more supernatural features than conversions in general, yet many Christians have passed through experiences which brought Christ very near, and left no doubt in their minds that the blessed Saviour spoke to them in hours of temptation and danger.

May the writer be excused for narrating an experience that occurred many years ago? When a student in the first class that entered Drew Theological Seminary I resolved to take a year of theological study in the Free Church College, Glasgow, Scotland, and to spend the summer months in travel. Some months before sailing on the Anchor Line for Scotland I had a dream that I was shipwrecked on the coast of Ireland. Some friends to whom the dream was told advised me not to go; but as the journey seemed in the line of preparation for the ministry I thought nothing of the dream, crossed the ocean in safety, and spent the fall and winter in theological study in Glasgow. Some time in March, which is accounted the stormiest month on the ocean, I planned to return to the United States and join one of the Spring Conferences. During the winter two or three vessels of the Anchor Line, on which I was to

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sail, were wrecked, and my mind turned with some measure of anxiety to my dream. Two weeks or so before sailing I sat one evening in my room thinking of the ocean voyage, and the gospel ministry, that was to follow it, and looking to God that his will might be done in all that lay before me, when there came over me an awful sense of the divine presence. I glanced about the room to see if anything was visible, but saw nothing. There was only a feeling of God's presence in the room where I was sitting, and I trembled violently with a sense of awe at the thought, "Lo, God is here." This feeling lasted for several moments, and then my mind became calm. The thought that remained permanent in my mind—I think I may say ever since—was: I can go anywhere, and do anything, for God is with me and by me in all the events of life.

Many Christians have such experiences, which are a little out of the ordinary; but they are not at all necessary to a healthy and happy religious experience. Multitudes of Christians are easily persuaded to commence the service of Christ, and they go on the even tenor of their way until a triumphant death transports them to the heavenly mansion which Christ has gone to prepare for them. Some Christians are discouraged because they never have the unusual experiences which others narrate. Let Paul bring comfort to all such.

The life of Paul is perhaps the grandest purely human life the world has seen; and his dying testimony is the noblest of which we have any record. And it is Paul, who had such unusual experiences, met such trials and temptations, and in a cruel death left such a glorious dying testimony, who takes such pains to assure all Christians that their uneventful lives of devotion to Christ shall deserve and receive the same reward from the ascended Lord as apostles and martyrs.

When chained to the floor of a Roman dungeon Paul wrote his wonderful dying testimony in the Second Epistle to Timothy. We can easily imagine that

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when Paul wrote the words, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith," he laid down his pen to look over his life a little, and recall his battles and triumphs. There must have come to his mind the experiences which he met on the road to Damascus, and all the cruel experiences which he met while traveling over land and sea that he might preach Christ as the Saviour of the world. If ever a follower of Christ could say, "I have fought a good fight," Paul could say it, and there could scarcely be absent a feeling of pride when he remembered that he had never flinched, but had been true to his Master in every hour of danger.

But when he takes his pen again, he no longer looks at the cruel death just before him, nor does memory any longer chain him to the past, but faith glances far over the bloody valley of martyrdom, and he writes the memorable words, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." There is something glorious in these confident dying words of the great apostle. The world has beheld only one grander scene than this great, brave Christian warrior laying down his life for Jesus, and declaring with unfaltering faith in his dying testimony, "Henceforth there is a crown laid up for me." We could have forgiven Paul if he had closed his dying testimony with these words.

But his great, generous heart added the clause for all Christians, in all times: "And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." In these words the great and unusual Paul places himself on a level with all Christians, and declares them worthy of equal reward with himself. Paul's testimony becomes ours. "All them that love his appearing" means you and me, if we are serving God as best we can and looking for the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LESSON FOR APRIL 25

THE GOSPEL IN ANTIOCH

GOLDEN TEXT: "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."—Acts 11. 26.

BY J. C. CODDINGTON, B.D.

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, DEPOSIT, NEW YORK

ANTIOCH was the capital of the province of Syria, and the third city of the Roman empire. It was founded by Seleucus Nicator in the year 300 B. C., and named after his father, Antiochus. Of the sixteen Antiochs built by Seleucus, the one of Syria was the most magnificent. It was situated upon the southern bank of the Orontes River, and was surrounded by a great wall fifty feet in height, within which were four other walls encircling as many independent sections of the city. Situated only sixteen miles from the Mediterranean, Antioch was the mercantile center of the East by caravan and of the West by ships touching at the harbor Seleucia. It was the home of Seleucid princes, of wealthy Romans, of leading poets, and of successful generals, as well as the rendezvous of the less conspicuous classes, including Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, Europeans, Syrians, and Asiatics. In all, a million people thronged the streets of the city, well known "for the abundance of its conveniences and for the splendor of its luxury"; and though there were many features of both natural and artificial beauty there, the city rivaled Sodom and Gomorrah in its various forms of vice. The effectual fervent prayer of Abraham did not save the cities of the plain, as a sufficient number of righteous people could not be found; but the men of the lesson of to-day, with a greater fulcrum than that disclosed to the faithful Abraham, upon which to rest their lever of love, lifted

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some of the Antiochean people up out of their superstition and ignorance and sin, organizing them into the mother of all Gentile churches, from which the missionary of the cross should carry the light of truth, until all the world shall be bright with a radiance from the eternal throne. Antioch, therefore, has been a point of very great interest to students of the New Testament, as well as to those interested in the early development of the Christian church; for "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

The name Christian occurs only three times in the New Testament. It is of Jewish thought, of Greek root, and of Latin ending, and it is of interest to observe that the three nations that united in proclaiming Jesus the King of the Jews on the day of his crucifixion, now furnish elements for this new name which in future ages is to be one of honor throughout the earth. Many students think that it was given by the godless Antiocheans, of garrulous tongue and scurrilous wit, as a term of ridicule, but we join the minority in thinking that the "name may have been given simply as a distinctive title naturally chosen from the recognized and avowed devotion of the disciples to Christ as their leader." In either case, those without the church who gave this title spoke more wisely than they knew, as the word Christ means the same as Messiah, and involves the mediatorial work of the Master. What, then, does it mean to be a Christian? To be a Christian involves all the elements of discipleship, brotherhood, belief, and saintship. It involves an historic knowledge of Christ, a perfection of love for him, and a will subservient to his authority. To be a Christian means to be like Christ, as far as our human limitations will allow, in the development of a symmetrical manhood and womanhood, in ministering to the physical comforts of those about us, in resisting the approaches of the tempter, in continued prayer for those estranged from Christ, and in

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a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the kingdom. Paul said, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." No other man has a right to the name Christian. Alexander said to one of his soldiers who bore his name, and who was a coward, "Either change thy name or mend thy manners."

The church at Antioch had a splendid opportunity to know the real truth concerning the Christian life. First came the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who no doubt went to the synagogue first, after which they spoke to the Grecians with great effectiveness, preaching the Lord Jesus. Peter had broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile during his ministry at Cæsarea, through which aperture these men, with whom was the hand of the Lord, went to carry the message of the cross to those who required wisdom; to them they preached the wisdom of the Word which was made flesh and dwelt among us—a wisdom more divine than the utterances of the poets at the groves at Daphne, more powerful than the speculations of the Epicureans and Stoics, and more effectual than the religion of the many gods found by Paul in the Athenian city. Then came Barnabas in behalf of the church at Jerusalem to make investigations as to the character of the work being done, and when he had seen the grace of God he was glad. Barnabas was a man of broad views, of deep sympathies, and of genuine piety, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. He was therefore better fitted for this work than those of a narrow provincial type. He no doubt could have found room for criticism both in regard to the religious views of the disciples, the conduct of their daily life, and even in the way the men of Cyprus and Cyrene conducted their campaign; but to his mind the things of theology and ethics would naturally adjust themselves when their relations with their divine Lord were thoroughly cemented. There was development even in the perfect character of the Saviour himself, and

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these converts, having been born of the Spirit, would grow in the Spirit, proceeding from glory unto glory. So instead of criticism on the part of Barnabas, there was exhortation to cleave unto the Lord. And Barnabas, feeling his limitations in view of the increasing demands of the work, sought Saul of Tarsus, who, having come to Antioch, stayed an entire year and taught the people. What a very interesting book a record of Paul's work at Antioch would make! Judging from the outlines of his discourses which we have, we infer that from the very start they were filled with doctrine, argument, and experience. Some may have felt disappointed in him before he began to speak, but as soon as they heard him magnify the crucified Christ, which was his chief glory, his physical limitations were forgotten. So powerful was his presentation of the truth, so enrapturing was the glow of his thought, and so filled with divine power was the soul of the messenger that the audience saw no man save Jesus only. Under such inspiring influences the people of Antioch who waited upon the messages of these men of God had every opportunity to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so fully did they believe in Christ, and so earnestly did they endeavor to do his will, that "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

As already implied, there are additional reasons why the name Christian was given at this time. The new movement had an objective as well as a subjective bearing. The people of the city who were students of Christianity took knowledge of these leaders that they had partaken of the spirit of their Master. This fact was shown in at least three ways:

I. *By the universal note in their preaching.* The followers of Christ had been slow to apprehend the splendid sweep of the gospel, but now the horizon of their spiritual understanding is beginning to enlarge. They are willing to have the Gentiles come into the

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church, though not without the formality of the Mosaic dispensation. Later they saw the weakness of this position and that the gateway of the kingdom was open to Jew and Gentile alike on the basis of repentance and faith. So to them the gospel became like the leaven, the silent forces of which are to continue to expand more and more until all contiguous elements are leavened, like a warfare in which the divinely panoplied soldiers are to engage, and with an all-inclusive victory in the name of the Lord; like a sun, the effulgent rays of which are to shine with "impartial splendor and ungrudging benediction," and so dissipate the darkness of earth that all the race shall dwell in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

II. *By the evangelistic spirit manifested.* Through the preaching of the men of Cyprus and Cyrene and of Barnabas great numbers believed and turned unto the Lord. And when the situation became more complicated Barnabas sought the assistance of Saul, the most effective evangelist of the ages. Many revivals of an important character are recorded in the Bible, and during the first centuries of the Christian Church a tremendous impression was thus made on the non-Christian world. The times have changed, but not the horrors of sin or the requirements of the kingdom of God. The chasm between the two is just as wide and deep now as then, the only difference being in the methods of work and in the place of emphasis in the preaching. Jonathan Edwards frightened men into the kingdom, Charles G. Finney argued them into accepting Christ, and J. W Chapman wins them by the melting power of love. There is no ironclad rule as to whether a pastor shall do evangelistic work alone or have the assistance of a reputable evangelist. The method of procedure depends upon all the conditions at hand, but the imperative obligation of the church is to vindicate her right to exist by imitating the zeal of the Antiochean movement with such power that

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those on the outside may not only be strongly impressed, but be constrained to come into the kingdom.

III. *By their philanthropic attitude.* The origin of this word is Greek, meaning "love of mankind," but the Greeks did not give the word the practical illustration that we find in Christianity, neither is it found "in the Koran, nor the Vedas or the Shasters, nor in the Zend Avesta"; only in the "limpid clearness of the Gospels do we see a new light which brought a new spirit into the world." In accord with this sentiment the prophet Agabus stood up and announced that there would be a dearth throughout the world, hence every one according to their ability determined to send relief to the brethren who dwelt in Judea, which was sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. There are very many illustrations of this Samaritan spirit in the early days of the church, and very few during the Middle Ages. During the last century, however, institutions of benevolence have multiplied exceedingly, and also in the time of famine, fire, and flood disaster, the creed of the heart has found becoming expression in its endeavor to meet the needs of those without food, without shelter and without medical care.

It cost the Lord of glory an infinite price to give expression to the fullness of the meaning in the word Christian, and the least his followers can do, with any degree of self-respect, is to continue the world-wide movement inaugurated by him with a devotion and a heroism which is born of God. With the millions of members, of talents, and of gold within the pale of the church to-day, together with the splendid momentum gained in recent years, what wonderful things ought to be accomplished in the next few decades!—a dominance of church power in our cities and towns, a social life far above its present standing, a great country redeemed from the curse of drink, a peace sentiment that shall make war impossible, and a world transformed by the power of Christ's redeeming love.

LESSON FOR MAY 2

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY— CYPRUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."—Mark 16. 15.

BY WILLIAM BURT, D.D., LL.D.

BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

IN obedience to our Lord's sublime command to go into all the world the Apostle Paul did notable work on the continent of Europe. Wherever he preached there he found the gospel the power of God unto salvation. Now, after the lapse of centuries, the missionary impulse is still in the church, and in larger measure Europe still offers opportunities for missionary effort, and the triumphs of the gospel in this part of the world as elsewhere show the eternal and universal saving grace of the gospel of the Son of God. As I have been for many years a missionary in Italy, and as my official residence has been for the past quadrennium and now is, in Europe, and I have had unusual opportunity for studying Methodism's missionary enterprises on that continent where Paul labored with such abandon and success, at the suggestion of the Editor I venture to give a brief account of our Methodist work in Europe.

I. Our work in Europe, as well as its growth and development, is purely providential. We are in Europe because God led us there, and in spite of enormous difficulties we have succeeded because God has approved and blessed our efforts. German and Scandinavian immigrants were converted at our altars here, and then they sought to evangelize their relatives and friends in the fatherland. The method was simply that of the New Testament. Andrew finds Jesus and he immediately goes and tells Simon, saying, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

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II. *Thousands of our European converts belong to our church and other evangelical churches in America.* Who can estimate the blessings that have come to the home land through these emigrants who have carried with them there a living Christian experience, and hence have become agents for good to their fellow country men in America? Now we can see one of the providential reasons why as a church we were led to the continent of Europe. We are constantly sending over there Methodist missionaries from Europe to preach to their fellow countrymen, Italians, Finns, Hungarians, Bohemians, and others. We believe that when our church shall be fully awakened to her duty and privilege in the home land we shall reap a rich harvest.

III. *Statistics of the work as it now exists, encouraging as they are, do not tell of all the victories won.* Methodism has already become a spiritual force among the nations of Europe, saving them from cold rationalism and dead formalism. We know, and spiritually minded people who are not members of the Methodist Church acknowledge, that we have been the means of the salvation of thousands who are not called by our name. One writing us from Germany last summer said: "It would rejoice your heart to see the union existing between state-church pastors and our preachers." Professor Harnack has said: "No type of believers has interested me more than the Methodists. If I read Church history correctly, that denomination is richest in experimental religion, most active in Christian work, most fertile in results of all since the time of the Reformation." What Methodism has done for the English-speaking world, Methodism will accomplish on the continent of Europe. The greatest blessing that could possibly come to all these countries would be a revival of soul-stirring, conscience-awakening, joyous Methodism, and I am happy to assure Christian people that the revival is on.

IV Let me now speak of some of the fields where we

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labor in obedience to Christ's command to preach the gospel to every creature.

1. *Bulgaria.* Nearly all who go to Bulgaria, and see the country as it is, and personally witness what is being done there, come back, in spite of all the criticisms of the past, enthusiastic for our Bulgaria Mission. There is something about the country which captures sympathy, stirs enthusiasm, and kindles hope. I cannot understand how one can read the history of modern Bulgaria without being profoundly stirred. The Bulgarians may not be the most attractive of the Balkan races, but they possess sterling qualities which must tell in the long run. Social questions are beginning to arouse the people from indifference, and education is undermining the superstitions and influence of the state church. We have made five visits to Bulgaria, and we can see no reason why our church should not succeed there. Thank God, we are succeeding.

2. *Hungary and Austria.* Hungary is a country larger in area than Austria, Italy, or that of Great Britain. It comprises every variety of scenery from the cold pine forests of the North to the vineyards and olive gardens in the South. There are immense fields of wheat like those in Kansas or Iowa; great plains for cattle, and large mineral resources, especially iron, copper, and tin. The Danube and Theiss are both great navigable rivers, highways of commerce. The Hungarian, sometimes called the Englishman of the East, is high-minded, patriotic almost to excess, strong-willed, full of ideas, and, in national and economic matters, of consuming energy. In no country of Europe are the elements which make for liberty, equality, and justice more alive than in Hungary. A few years ago a copy of the Christliche Apologete, published at Cincinnati, came into the hands of a schoolmaster at Verbasz. He subscribed for the paper, formed a reading circle, and every week read portions of it to his friends and neighbors. In one of the copies he found the address of our

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minister at Vienna, and sent for him to come and preach to them. A gracious revival was the result and now we have twelve preaching places. Austria is still a difficult field, but the door is being pried open. Universal suffrage has been granted, and during the past few years more than 50,000 people have abandoned property at the cry of "Los von Rom."

3. *Italy.* There are at present 3,689 members in Italy, a net gain of 963. We also have property valued at \$465,000, a net gain during the quadrennium of \$100,000. God has shown us a wide-open door for the evangelization of the Italians, both in Italy and in America. If we allow this day of opportunity to pass unimproved, woe to us and to our great church!

4. *Switzerland.* Here we have nearly 10,000 members, and more than 22,000 scholars and teachers. My first Conference there was at Schaffhausen. On Sunday we were granted the use of the old cathedral; about 2,000 people assembled. You can imagine my feelings that Sabbath morning as I preached from that old pulpit dating from before the time of the Reformation. It was to me a vindication of time and an inspiring prophecy.

5. *Germany.* Our success in this great empire is far beyond what the fathers of fifty years ago dared to dream might be possible. We have progressed most where the spirit of opposition has been the greatest. For instance in Saxony, our people have, until very recently, been fined and sometimes imprisoned. When one wishes to join our church he must go to the pastor of the state church and declare his intention. After four weeks of reflection he must return and renew his declaration. Then he receives a certificate which he takes to the court, and his name is enrolled among the dissenters, and he has to pay about three dollars for the necessary papers. Precisely here we are making the largest gains. No one can now imagine the possibilities of the future when the spirit of Methodism

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shall have more thoroughly permeated that great people. I sometimes have glorious visions of what our German Methodists are to accomplish in the world.

6. *Sweden, Norway, and Denmark.* In these northern lands our work is steadily progressing. We have here 27,500 members and 200 ministers. We have had a greater influence over the state church than even in Germany. Still our mission is not yet accomplished, and brighter days are awaiting us in the near future.

7. *France.* At a reception given to the College of Cardinals on March 19, 1904, Pope Pius X took occasion to pay his respects to President Loubet, and to reprove the French government for its hostile attitude toward the Romish Church. The effect in France, however, was exactly the contrary to what was described by the Pope. "March 21, 1905," said George Clemenceau, "will be a memorable date in the history of the French republic and of the Church of Rome." On that day began one of the greatest debates of history on one of the most far-reaching measures, the separation of church and state. The Roman hierarchy did all in its power to prevent the catastrophe, but on July 3, 1905, the measure was voted through. On May 23, 1907, we organized on Rue Calvin, Geneva, our Methodist mission to France. We have begun work at five centers —Chambéry, Grenoble, Lyons, Avignon, and Marseilles. At Chambéry and Lyons we worship in chapels once used by the Roman Catholics, and there is much to encourage us.

8. *Russia.* Thank God, we are also in Russia. We entered by way of Finland and Germany, led by the providence of God. Regular services were inaugurated in Saint Petersburg, November 3, 1907, with preaching in Russian, Finnish, and Swedish. There is a profound conviction among many Europeans that the next great religious awakening on the Continent is to be in Russia. There are thousands upon thousands of people in Russia who have of recent years been reading the

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Word of God, and coming into possession of a personal Christian experience. The doors are wide open, and the call is very urgent.

V *It is on the continent of Europe that Methodism is brought face to face with the Greek and Romish Churches.* The Greek Church has become degenerate and corrupt and devoid of the spirit of evangelical Christianity. The study of God's Word has not only been discouraged but often forbidden. Mass is substituted for the gospel, penance for repentance, the Virgin Mary and saints for Christ. Religion and conduct are divorced. The conception of God is that of a tyrant whose anger must be appeased by the constant repetition of prayers and by chanting in an unknown tongue. It is pagan in all but name.

The evils of the Greek Church are multiplied and emphasized in Romanism, but with this difference, that the latter is Jesuitically aggressive. It is marvelous how successful the Jesuits have been in breaking down opposition to a system by getting us to look at a person. The person may be a humble parish priest, a self-forgetting nun, a decent bishop, or a goodish Pope. It makes no difference so long as they can influence us to believe that because certain individuals are not so bad as Romanism has been represented to be, therefore the system has been misrepresented.

If the papacy shall triumph through Jesuitism in Protestant nations, or if Roman Catholic Europe shall be allowed to sink into atheism, let me ask, what will be the final result on the Christian civilization which we have sought and are seeking, at so great a sacrifice, to establish in China, India, and Africa? It is not simply a question of quantity, but also of quality. We must save Europe and America if we would save the heathen world. We must save the heathen world if we would save ourselves.

LESSON FOR MAY 9

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY— ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA

GOLDEN TEXT: “The word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.”—Acts 13. 49.

BY J. E. ROBINSON, D.D.

MISSIONARY BISHOP IN SOUTHERN ASIA, BOMBAY, INDIA

BROADLY, the term “the word of the Lord,” as frequently met with in the Acts of the Apostles, and elsewhere in the New Testament, simply means the gospel message delivered by Christian disciples in the power of the Spirit poured forth upon them at Pentecost or upon subsequent occasions. It embodied the testimony concerning the risen and ascended Lord borne by his anointed disciples to their fellows. These disciples were men and women fully qualified to be his witnesses “in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth,” by the enduement of power which became theirs in receiving “the promise of the Father.”

In other places the proclaimed gospel is referred to as the word of life, the word of His grace, the word of the message, the word of the cross, the word of this salvation. Peter, quoting from Isaiah, says: “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word (saying) of the Lord abideth forever; and this is the word of the good tidings which was preached unto you.” The identification is complete. Long before the gospels or epistles were written, men were saved from sin and built up in Christ their living Head through the preached word. Paul’s method, a most successful method, was to manifest the truth to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. Inestimably

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precious as we hold the Scriptures to be, it is not these but the Christ of whom they testify that saves. To him, the living, reigning Jesus—our Prophet, Priest, and King—must the thought of the children of men be directed. The spiritual dynamic of the Christian faith is “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” and the belief that saves is that which has respect unto him rather than unto anything that men may say concerning him. Yet it is ever through what people hear *about* Jesus that they are led to put their trust *in* him.

In the mission fields of the church multitudes who can neither read nor write are convinced of sin and led into a genuine experience of salvation through personal faith in Jesus Christ. The word of the Lord, which is “living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” finds its way to the hearts of many who have never read a line of the New Testament nor seen a copy of the Bible. Fruitful work of evangelism often develops on a large scale before the printed page finds its way into the hands of inquirers or disciples.

On the other hand, great ingatherings sometimes occur in connection with wide distribution of the printed Scriptures. This was notably the case in connection with the mass movement of thirty years ago or so among the Telugus of South India. For a decade or more the small force of American Baptist missionaries in the region round about Ongole and Nellore had been sowing their field of labor with gospel portions and evangelistic literature, accompanying the widespread distribution with extensive preaching, without witnessing any results worth reckoning. But there came an hour when the breath of the Almighty blew upon the dry bones in the Telugu country, and soon thousands definitely separated themselves from their idolatry and became earnest disciples of the Lord Jesus. In any case, and in every case, the salvation which reaches the hearts of men most assuredly becomes theirs through direct contact with, and personal reception of,

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Christ, revealed as Saviour and Lord in the Scriptures, and made a “living bright reality” to the soul through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

It may not be amiss to remind ourselves of the immense obligation which all missionary societies and missionaries are under to the Bible Societies of Great Britain and America. These noble societies afford magnificent help in the work of evangelization by their translations of the Scriptures into the languages of earth and by the facilities which they furnish for the supply of the Scriptures, thus translated, at moderate rates or entirely free. The Bible Societies make the churches of Evangelical Christendom their debtors, and in contributing to their funds the followers of Christ are rendering most valuable help to the missionary cause and furthering the interests of the kingdom.

The more correct rendering of the text in the Revised Version suggests that the word of the Lord, the message of salvation, although itself a dynamic, needs a propulsive power behind it to make it effective in human experience. “The word of the Lord *was spread abroad*,” etc. Men and women who had passed out of death into life, and *knew* they had, spoke the word of the Lord, which had brought deliverance to themselves, into the hearts of neighbors and friends. In the exultation which their newborn faith had begotten in them, they “glorified the word of the Lord” by which they had been emancipated from the bondage of superstition and idolatry. Being joyful through hope and rooted in love, they told the story of their redemption to wondering relatives and acquaintances, many of whom in turn believed and were saved and became at once active propagators of the faith by which they had become so greatly enriched.

Preaching undoubtedly is the divinely appointed means of human salvation. It was preëminently so in the early days of Christianity. But a study of the Acts of the Apostles reveals the fact that much of

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the preaching of apostolic times consisted of the testimony of Spirit-filled disciples fortified with pertinent quotations from the Old Testament, all converging on the person and office of Jesus as the promised Messiah. The “prophesying” which occupied such a prominent place in the life of the early church was simply a *forth-telling* of the good tidings of salvation with inspired forcefulness. Marvelous indeed it is in our eyes to remember that all that Christianity had to oppose the whole might of heathenism in those days of conflict was the testimony of Christ. Preached from a living faith which worked by love, and accompanied by the testimony of life and conduct that demonstrated its divine effectiveness, the message spoken out of joyous hearts attested its origin by its renewing and transforming power. Testifying of Christ by word and life, in their love and suffering those early disciples won glorious victory.

Among the suggestive pictures to be seen in the Roman Catacombs, there is one, held by archæologists to be as early as the second century, which represents the gift of water in the desert as Moses smites the rock with his rod. Pressing around the gushing water, the people hold forth their drinking vessels to catch the life-giving stream. It can hardly be doubted that the picture reflects the impression made at that time by the preaching and testimony of the Christian disciples. “In the barren wilderness of heathenism, where men had sought and dug for water so long that at last they were in despair of finding any, now welled freshly forth the fountain of living water springing up into everlasting life; and thus many a soul among the heathen thirsting for truth, many a seeker after wisdom in the schools of the philosophers, in the temples of the gods the most diverse, or in Jewish houses of prayer, found here his deepest longing satisfied.”

More than one Christian historian has shown that what most deeply impressed the heathen and held them

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fast was the fact that with the Christians was to be found a joyful assurance of the divine favor, a calm and settled certainty of acceptance with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The disciples did not trouble themselves with the questions in casuistry which so largely occupied the thought of the philosophers of their time. They had attained to a blessed consciousness of the reality of fellowship with God, and with glowing confidence they reiterated the apostle's testimony: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, that declare we unto you."

History repeats itself in many a modern mission field. Men are still profoundly impressed by Christian testimony pervaded by the element of joy-inspiring confidence. There is before the writer's mind the experience of an eminently successful Indian preacher. He was formerly a bigoted Mohammedan. Once some one suggested the possibility of his becoming a Christian. He was greatly incensed at the bare suggestion, and drawing his hand across his throat with a fierce gesture he exclaimed, "I would cut my throat first." Passing a place of Christian worship one evening, a sudden impulse led him to enter. For the first time in his life he found himself in a company of worshiping Christians. It was the midweek prayer service, with the usual brief exposition of Scripture, prayer, song, and testimony. A profound impression was made upon his mind by the testimony of a woman who had found relief from a crushing burden by "taking it to the Lord in prayer." The idea of definite response to prayer was wholly foreign to the Moslem's conception of man's relation to God. It filled him with wonder that one should declare so confidently that Jesus Christ had interposed to help and bless. He could not dismiss the matter from his mind. Next day he sought out the missionary, at whose feet he learned the way of salvation through personal trust in the Mediator be-

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tween God and man. Without pausing to give the details of his subsequent education and training, suffice it to say that the brother referred to is now being wonderfully used in leading his fellow countrymen into the fold of Christ as an ordained minister in one of our Conferences.

The spread of Christianity in the lifetime of the apostles is a thrilling story of surpassing interest. The conditions were vastly different from those of the present time in many respects. Yet the underlying principles are much the same now as then. Modern missionaries are as fully persuaded as were the early missionaries of the ultimate triumph of Christianity. They too believe it to be the absolute religion, a divine revelation in a sense in which no other religion is, unconditionally true, and the religion for the whole world.

Is there not ample scope for a wider private diffusion of the Christian faith than is usually conceived of? The records lead us to believe that in apostolic times the work accomplished by the rank and file of the church through their personal efforts was more powerful and effective than the public proclamation of the truth. Private houses were the scene of great spiritual transformations long before a Christian sanctuary existed, and experiences were narrated and exchanged in the midst of the family circle and in the common activities of life with remarkable results. Personal effort to reach relatives and friends, and to bring neighbors to Christ, was conspicuously in evidence. The laity everywhere were assiduous in utilizing opportunity to make disciples and proved themselves to be enthusiastic propagators of the faith. Does the church find no suggestion in all this? The passing of the class or fellowship meeting is not one of the healthful signs of the times.

But while change is to be found everywhere, Christ abides! He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; the First and the Last, and the Living One.

LESSON FOR MAY 16

PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY— ICONIUM AND LYSTRA

GOLDEN TEXT: "All the gods of the nations are idols: but the Lord made the heavens."—Psa. 96. 5.

BY FRANK L. NEELD, D.D.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT, NORTH INDIA CONFERENCE.
NAINI TAL, INDIA

WHEN men do not know the true God they will invent an object of worship. Men instinctively worship. They feel their dependence and seek to cling for help and protection. There must be some object upon which to rest the mind and heart.

The nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues were lost—had wandered from the true God. They turn to images and creatures. They make temples for these images. They cling to these images and temples. In groves and on hill tops and at the sources of sacred streams they establish centers for worship. In the psalmist's time this was the case among all nations outside of the Jews. They were lost. God was seeking lost nations. Abraham and his family were called, disciplined, and trained and organized into a nation for the purpose of bringing the world back to God who made the heavens and the earth. Jehovah dwelt among this chosen nation that he might through it reach the lost, groping, benighted, idol-worshiping peoples. "Yea, he loved the people" (Deut. 33. 3). He called Moses to help. He established himself in a tabernacle among them. He condescended to appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat (Lev. 16. 2). From this manifestation point upon earth he arranged to meet with and commune with Moses of all things which he would give commandment unto the children of Israel (Exod. 25. 22). There was no *similitude* visible; only a *voice* was heard (Deut. 4. 12). This was

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the voice of the personal Father calling to his lost children from the throne of grace and mercy, warning them that idolatry would cause them to perish (Deut. 4. 26); that they would be degraded until they would be serving gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat, nor smell (Deut. 4. 28).

In the time of the writer of this psalm the gods of the nations were all idols—Egypt, Babylon, China, India, and Europe. What was going on in North and South America is not well known to history. But our Gentile ancestors were groping in the darkness, error, and bondage of idolatry somewhere, and our personal Father was sending his prophets and psalmists to call us back to himself. His purposes for us reached down through the ages. America was only among the possibilities yet to be realized.

In the Orient the Brahman priest of Benares was busily employed in making, putting to sleep, waking up, nursing, serving, and worshiping his idol gods. An old form of heathen civilization was forming under this idolatrous influence. The various blessed and normal relations in life were being perverted, and the best thought of the mind and purest affections of the heart were being mutilated. The foundations for the degradation of women were being laid. Philosophers of the East were ignorant of the great inheritance of sonship and high destiny of man; ignorant of the possibilities of this great world, and of the majesty, love, and fatherhood of God. The earth was in moral darkness. The poor people groping among metaphysical questionings, or feeling out after God in the abyss of darkness, found nothing better for mind and heart than the dumb idol.

God's great prophets in his chosen nation looked out into this deep, dark night and shuddered at the possibility of Israel losing her vision of the true God and becoming overwhelmed by the inclosing darkness of the

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idol-worshiping nations round about. Isaiah's heart was filled with distress when the encroachments of idolatry threatened his people. The stupidity of the people seemed greater than that of the "ox which knoweth his owner," and the "ass which knoweth his master's crib." Jehovah granted Isaiah a vision of himself upon the throne, which put nerve and power into him and sent him among the people to rescue them. As he worked and gazed out into the realm of surrounding darkness he caught a vision of the consoling God, the coming of a strong Redeemer. He saw through the dark separating clouds into the realm in which the true God dwells, and called out to his deteriorating nation to "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And nations shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see" (Isa. 60. 1-4).

Jeremiah was filled with sorrow as he saw the powerful influence of the idols of the surrounding nations coming into his nation. The *voice* of the living God came through the darkness and called him to be a "prophet unto the nations." He pleaded with touching pathos with the people to return to their God. He shows them his loving, fatherly heart. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31. 3). "I am a father to Israel" (Jer. 31. 9). "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off" (Jer. 31, 10). "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31. 33). "I will forgive their iniquity" (Jer. 31. 34). How he pleads with them to be true to God and avoid going after the "gods of the nations"!

The prophet Ezekiel rings out his message that the

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“nations may *know*” the Lord. “And they shall *know* that I am the Lord” (Ezek. 6. 10). “Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the watercourses and to the valleys: Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. And your altars shall become desolate, and your sun-images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols” (Ezek. 6. 3, 4).

Israel was overcome at last by Babylon, the idol-worshiping nation. She went into captivity and there in bondage to idolaters learned to value the true God, and on her return after captivity remained comparatively free from idol worship; but they again lost their vision of the true God and his majesty, glory, power, love, and mercy. The priests began to occupy their time pottering about the worldly sanctuary and its utensils of worship; cultivating rites and ceremonies, instead of men, women, and children. These leaders became dwarfed in their conceptions and lost light and vision. People like Simeon and Anna were looking into the prevailing darkness with longing expectation when Jesus came as the Light of the world. He came to “Galilee of the nations.” The people that walked in darkness saw a great light. Jesus the Son of man, the Son of God, came to show us the Father.

He came into the midst of these small, argumentative, ritualistic, race-bound, family-proud sects of blind leaders of the blind. He called upon them to enlarge their range and change their minds; repent and believe and accept the larger life of faith in the living God who made the heavens and the earth. He is your Father. He cares for the sparrow. He cares for you. He brought life and immortality into the light. He made the unseen realm live. He presented a new eternal life of light, joy, peace, and righteousness. He becomes the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. Behold him. Turn from idols. Darkness vanishes before his light. Sin is taken away by his blood. Ignorance

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of God is removed as he shows us our heavenly Father. Diffusion of new life, light, purity, and holiness is accomplished by his calling and sending his disciples into all the dark world of mankind to "teach *all* nations." God was in Christ reconciling the *world* unto himself. Jesus Christ and him crucified became the mercy seat. He became the place where man may meet and commune with his Father. God who sought to reconcile man in past ages through Moses and the prophets is still seeking man through the mediation of his Son, who becomes our great High Priest in the very presence of God, ever living to make intercession for us. The sacerdotalism of the world may now turn its gaze from creatures and material objects to the great High Priest of mankind. With upturned eyes, with large soul vision, man may "survey the wondrous cross" in all its large relations to God, man, and the vast world which is now our neighborhood and home. Jesus said he would not leave his disciples orphans. He brings us to our Father. There should be no place for idols in all our neighborhood. The idols are an abomination. They *must* be abolished.

Jesus wants helpers, laborers. He prays for them. "The Lord hath need of them." He called young Paul. Paul was one of those severe law-bound Pharisees. Jesus showed himself and spoke. Paul saw the heavenly vision and heard the voice. He was transformed into a tender-hearted man living in the full consciousness of the gracious presence of God. The voice said to this Pharisee, "Depart, for I will send thee *far hence* unto the *nations*." The nations, Greece, Rome, and others, were still worshiping Zeus, Minerva, Jupiter, Mercury, Shiv, Krishna, and all the gods of all lands. A converted Pharisee among the nations! In this fourteenth chapter of Acts we have a picture of this missionary at work. He is meeting with some difficulties, persecuted, flattered, stoned. It is hard work. There are lots of details to look after. He seems to retain "overhead

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connections" with currents of power, and writes in his correspondence with his disciples and converts that he "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth." His movement from Asia Minor to Europe by way of Troas and Philippi seems to have been directed by a telephone, at one end of which the voice of the "Spirit of Jesus" speaks—the same voice that spoke to Moses from the mercy seat. He feels now fully convinced that God's purposes are one through the ages, and that all these purposes are consummated in Jesus Christ, and that he is a servant following in the train of Christ.

He was eager that "all the nations might hear" this good news. He did what he could to awaken the nations from their deadness and worship of an unknown God, and also did all he could to enlarge the vision of the Jews. Although the Jews closed their eyes then to their opportunities, yet his turning to the nations brought light to Europe and America. We now "walk in the light of the Lord," and are occasionally reminded of the dark and idolatrous condition of our forefathers when we see some of their idols in our museums.

This is the twentieth century of the Christian era. Moses, Christ, Paul wrought on earth and they did well. But more than half of the people of the nations still worship idols. They do not know that the God who made the heavens is their Father. Jesus wants them to *know* the "true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent," for this is "life eternal." Jesus is pleading for messengers to go and "teach all nations." He has given our age most remarkable powers and facilities for "going." He has given us teaching ability. He has made the nations receptive. We won't hold back from his service longer, will we? "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." One Voice invites all to one center: "Come unto me."

LESSON FOR MAY 23

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM

GOLDEN TEXT: "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."—Acts 15. 11.

BY WILLIAM G. KOONS, A.M.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT EASTERN DISTRICT, WILMINGTON CONFERENCE, SMYRNA, DELAWARE

THE church has had some important councils in the course of her history—important because they settled aright questions that vitally concerned the life and progress of the kingdom. But perhaps no more important church assembly was ever convened than that first Council at Jerusalem. Paul, Barnabas, Peter, and James spoke for the majority. Neither the names nor the speeches of the opposition are given. The question at issue was, "Must Gentile converts add to their faith in Christ circumcision as an essential to salvation?" The Jewish Christians of Jerusalem, because of their history and training, were most strenuous in upholding the necessity of circumcision. Paul and Barnabas were equally vigorous in defending the sufficiency of faith in Christ without circumcision. The battle was hot. The text is at once a part of the speech of the apostle Peter, and in substance the finding of the council, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

We may learn from this incident,

I. *That battle and struggle are the price paid by the race for many of its most precious truths.* The Saviour had spoken a world-wide gospel, special miracles had been wrought to widen the vision of the church, and the work among the Gentiles had been evidently blessed of God; but a council, a controversy, and a battle royal were necessary before recognition was given to the truth that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is broad enough

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to embrace both Jews and Gentiles, and mighty enough to save without circumcision. What convulsions attended the church's first official statement of the deity of Christ, made at the Council of Nicæa! The church was storm-tossed and rent asunder as it emerged out of mediæval darkness into the light of the Reformation, and saw that "The just shall live by faith." Likewise the great practical truths which were born with the Wesleyan revival had their advent in the midst of storm and stress.

However, that ecclesiastical battle at Jerusalem had its hopeful side. Its very fierceness indicated that the men who met there took their religion seriously. They evidently thought both doctrine and practice of great importance. They did not believe that anything will pass if only you are sincere. They had convictions. They had thought them through; they were not willing to surrender them except in the presence of higher light and evident truth. The conflict at Jerusalem was a sign of life, vigor, and health. There is a church unity and serenity which is born of deadly indifference. There is such a thing as a church frozen together. The church of apostolic date was not suffering that way.

Lack of religious seriousness on the part of the unsaved masses of our time is the explanation of their indifference. It is very queer that men who are serious about every other concern of their lives will push aside religion as a matter of no importance, when it is most serious of all. If they have any religious convictions they are not the product of persistent robust thinking, but a kind of accidental deposit on the surface of the mind. They think through a business proposition, and chase a scientific problem to surrender, but religion is allowed to go haphazard. Seriousness leads to conviction, conviction to action, and action to Christ.

Again, lack of seriousness accounts for much of the inconsistency, inactivity, sluggishness, and failure of the church. Religion has not reached the hot spot. The

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church has gained in breadth, but it has been at the expense of intensity. She has gained in favor with the world, but it has been in part by a surrender of seriousness in her view of her own doctrines and mission. Seriousness is closely related to enthusiasm. A live church, a struggle over a religious problem, and the birth of a big truth for the race are all vitally related.

II. *That there is a constant battle between the essential and the nonessential.* The new dispensation of saving grace in Jesus Christ had rendered the Jewish forms and ceremonies meaningless and nonessential. But pride of race, bigotry for creed, and the prejudices of a lifetime are not easily overcome. So these Jewish Christians, while believing in Christ and trusting in his saving grace, tacked on the Jewish ceremonies as necessary to salvation. Hence the Council at Jerusalem was a battle brought on by the dropping of the nonessential. The decision was epoch-making. It advised the Gentile converts to observe certain harmless Jewish requirements for prudential reasons, relegated circumcision to the rear, and fixed on the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one essential for salvation.

The battle of Jerusalem must be frequently repeated. Forms, creeds, and rituals grow. The Christian church has been compelled again and again to rise up and shake off the nonessentials which endangered her very life. The Lutheran Reformation was such a shaking. The ecclesiastical rubbish heap was upset and under it the Bible found. The Wesleyan Reformation was another shaking. When this testing was over church forms and sacraments had found their proper place and vital religious experience and life were in the high light.

A shaking of the church to-day would eliminate such figments as apostolic succession of the prelatical sort, the bigotry which holds one special mode of baptism to be necessary to salvation, and the foolish notion that membership in any one branch of the church is a necessity to one desiring to be a Christian. On the same

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rubbish heap would fall that equally narrow idea that anyone to become a Christian must pass through a specific and uniform set of emotional changes and manifestations. The church in our time has come a long way toward dropping the nonessential in matters of belief and in fixing down solidly on the few vital doctrines. There has been a shortening of the creed, and a consequent intensifying of beliefs. One mistake of the church in the past has been to set forth a creed which embraced not only the essential, practical doctrines, but much that was nonessential. The requirement of belief in the whole creed—essential and nonessential alike—led to insincerity on the one hand, and unbelief on the other. The Wesleyan Revival put the whole Christian church under obligation when it emphasized the directly practical doctrines which concern our salvation, and allowed great individual liberty of opinion on those doctrines which are interesting but not essential. As Henry Ward Beecher said, “First attend to the task of getting the pigs out of the garden and thus save the cabbages, and then discuss the question as to how they got in.” “How to be saved” is of vastly more importance than “How sin got into the world.”

One of the needs of our times is a new placing of the emphasis in our creeds. We must get the emphasis on the directly saving truths. For instance, present-day discussion is giving a prominence to the virgin birth of Christ, which had better be placed on his atoning death. The latter is the more directly practical doctrine. Again, we need to dwell less on the preëxistence of Christ, and more on the doctrine of his risen, victorious, ever-present life in our midst to-day. The Council at Jerusalem set us a wholesome example in its separation of the essential from the subsidiary.

III. That salvation is by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. No ceremony, sacrament, benevolence, or good work can either take the place of or supplement the saving work of Jesus Christ. Saint Peter saw

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clearly that the Gentile convert would add nothing to his salvation by circumcision, and that the one, only, and all-sufficient means of salvation is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ here we mean not only his general benignity toward the race, nor his pity for our sin and misery; but rather grace active, love and pity in motion, his unsought and undeserved condescension, labor, and suffering for our redemption—grace manifest, powerful, transforming the nature, and thus commanding the life. Such grace needs no supplement.

This grace manifested itself in the historical Christ. Go to Bethlehem and you will see grace in the manger of condescension. Stand in the crowd on the mountain side and you will hear grace in a world-message. Follow the footsteps of Jesus as he goes about doing good and you will see grace in a life of service for others. Go to dark Gethsemane and you will see grace bearing the sorrows and stripes of others. Stand on Calvary and you will see grace which stopped not at death for the salvation of a lost race. But the foregoing is only a chronicle of historic grace. The blessed fact is that the Christ of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary is actively present in the world to-day. He is here completing the work of grace of which the historic past is only the beginning. He is in the world—the mightiest personality in it—seeking the lost, transforming the sinful, lifting the fallen, leading his church, directing the course of history. This Christ needs no supplement.

The church in apostolic times was in danger of substituting Jewish ceremony—once the channel of God's grace, but now displaced by the new and better covenant—for the living, saving Christ. So to-day we are in danger of putting churchliness, saying of prayers, giving of alms, culture, or some other merely earthly thing, in the place of Christ, who alone can save. Grace! Saving grace! Sanctifying grace! Grace

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enough for each, enough for all, enough for evermore! John Bunyan knew something about this grace when he entitled one of his books *Grace Abounding*. Philip Doddridge sang of this grace when he gave to the church that immortal hymn :

Grace! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heaven with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

IV *That the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is wide enough to embrace all nations—the whole human race.* Ever since the fall in Eden God has been following a plan—a plan dictated by unerring wisdom and unwearying love—for the salvation of the whole race. This plan sweeps round the whole world and through all time. This is the goal toward which all history marches. God's peculiar favors to the Jewish race, and the fact that Jesus spent his earthly life within the narrow confines of Jewry, are no disproof. These were necessary steps, leading up to and preparing for the world-wide outlook. Peter only reached the top and got a world-vision after a lift by a special miracle. The Council at Jerusalem was the final struggle of the early church in reaching this high summit where it could see the whole race swept, uplifted, and redeemed by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The early church was astonished to find that the Gentile peoples were helped and saved by the grace of God even as the Jews had been. The church in successive ages has been astonished to find the same grace fitting the needs of the Hindu, the African, the Chinaman, the Japanese, until it is the universal faith of the church to-day, as never before, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is a match for the needs of the whole world; that the grace which went to Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary will not fail nor be discouraged until the whole race shall be transformed and lifted into righteousness, holiness, and heaven.

LESSON FOR MAY 30

BELIEVING AND DOING

GOLDEN TEXT: "Faith without works is dead."—James 2. 20.

BY WILLIAM H. MORGAN, D.D.

PASTOR CENTRAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

IN the introduction and development of the Christian religion each apostle had a distinct mission and message. Great doctrines must be stated and defended. A rich subjective life must be enjoyed and expressed. The ethics of the new religion must be clearly explained and specifically applied. Hence we have Paul, the theologian, stating the doctrines and emphasizing "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." We have John, the man of spiritual insight, writing of fellowship with God, the Father, and with Christ, the Son, through the Holy Ghost; while James puts his emphasis upon conduct—upon the *works produced by Christian faith*.

To the superficial student of the New Testament, there seems to be an antagonism between the teaching of Paul and James. Martin Luther did not hesitate to say that the letter of James was wanting in "all evangelical character"—was "a veritable straw epistle." But this criticism only shows us that even so great a man as Luther may fail to understand a book and comprehend its teaching. The soul of the great German was all on fire with the cardinal doctrine of salvation by faith. Faith was his battle cry. It filled his whole horizon; it was the supreme idea of his life.

Paul and James, however, do not differ, except in the emphasis; each goes to the opposite side of one and the same great truth. They are fighting opposite errors, not face to face, but back to back. Faith and works are not in conflict, but rather in harmony—the harmony

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of "cause and effect, of seed and fruit, of principle and principle applied."

I. We can understand Paul and James more perfectly when we remember to whom they wrote and the purpose of their epistles.

1. Paul wrote to those who had repudiated faith, and who believed that by deeds of the law they would be saved. He spoke to the self-righteous legalist, who, by fasting and prayer, by tithes and charities, by strict observance of the sacred feasts, seasons and ceremonies, expected to earn salvation. Hence Paul decried the groundwork of their hopes, and affirmed that not by deeds of the law, but by a living act of faith in an atoning Lord, were men justified and saved. "By grace are ye saved through faith." The two great thoughts of Paul are *sin* and *grace*. His supreme contention is that a sinner can be justified only through faith in the righteousness of Christ.

2. James wrote to a people who had repudiated works, both of law and of faith. They agreed with Paul in his denial of the ability of works of the law to save and in his contention for the efficacy of faith. But here they stopped. They became careless Antinomians, discarding of the law, worldly minded, respecters of persons, uncharitable, neglectful of widows and orphans, slanderers, and the like. James calls their attention to the duties of the Christian life and gives them to understand that a faith which does not express itself in acts of obedience and service is hollow and false. The two great thoughts of James are *knowing* and *doing*. Men who think, who feel, who believe, must also do. Confession, without corresponding conduct, is sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

II. The points of view of Paul and James were not the same, but they substantially agree. Paul and James agree that we are saved by *faith in Christ*. Salvation is a man's first and greatest need. How is it to be attained? Our Lord's statement is ever one

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in substance. "Whosoever believeth" is the formulary of admission into the Christian life. This also was the preaching of the apostles. No matter what a man's condition, history, position, nationality, vocation, previous creed, age, or social relation may have been, the one thing insisted on was "faith in Christ." Sometimes the expression was "faith in his blood"; "faith in his name"; "faith in the Son of God," but always faith going out and centering in the divine Christ. No man with a New Testament before him can announce any other condition.

With this great fact James is in perfect harmony. He has no controversy with faith as the method of our appropriation of divine forgiveness and life. He takes this faith for granted in his hearers. He assumes that they have entered into the kingdom. In the first chapter, verse 3, he refers to faith as that principle the trial and exercise of which shall at length make its possessor "perfect and entire." Further on, in verse 21, he speaks of the meek reception of the ingrafted word, that is to say, unquestioning faith, as that "which is able to save your souls." In the second chapter, verse 1, "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ" is represented as that fundamental thing the right exercise of which constitutes one a true brother in the Christian household. It is the counterfeit, not the genuine, against which the apostle lifts up his note of warning. His contention is for a richer, deeper, more vital faith; a faith which is the root of the tree whose fruits are deeds of righteousness and helpfulness. And in this again he is in perfect agreement with Christ and the other apostles.

III. Nowhere in the Bible is saving efficacy ascribed to a faith that is lifeless and inoperative. With unre-served plainness, our Saviour taught that believing is the one condition of being saved. But not less plainly did he say, "By their fruits ye shall know them." "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." How

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mighty is the change of emphasis when we pass from the beginning of the Christian life to the end! In that final scene, pictured by our Lord in Matthew's Gospel, he forecasts the real issue. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat," etc. It was things done—things done until they were incorporated into character. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," etc. It was things not done—not done until they became the impression and register of the real moral state of the soul. Not a word of faith; it is all about works. No word of praise is given, and no word of fault is uttered, on the basis of what has been believed or not believed. What one believes or does not believe is not made the basis of the award, it is what one has done.

Listen to Paul, the champion of faith, as he declares that faith is an energy that must produce results. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." God is one, so this apostle tells us, "who will render to every man according to his deeds." The stress is laid on deeds; on what one has done and has come to be. This is not saying that external acts of obedience, or personal righteousness of any kind, procures entrance into the kingdom. But it is saying that the faith which does procure it will, so fast and far as opportunity is given, attest its reality and right quality by a righteous and godly life.

James says, "Faith without works is dead." "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" Is it *faith* against which his interrogation is directed? No. But it is defective faith to which he refers. The greatest Voice which has ever spoken to men gave utterance to the same thought when he said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

A man says he has faith, and he may be honest in

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this saying. But look at his life. Are there any evidences of such faith in his character and his works for men? Right belief should lead to right action. Faith which does not restrain from that which is dishonest and impure, and false and base, which does not incite to diligence in doing the Lord's will, to uprightness in human relations and fidelity in distinctively Christian service, is a withered skeleton. In that great day whose revelations will be real and searching, such faith will not stand. "Then," says our Saviour, "will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Saving faith is a working faith, a living energy, the very life of Him

Who wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought.

It involves a return of the entire man to the Christ of God, a return which continually shows itself in acts of devotion and of praise, in ministering deeds, and in unselfish consecration and suffering for the welfare of mankind. "Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." The apostle cites one great personality as proof of his position. No citation could be happier, no life more conclusive than Abraham's. *Faith in action* epitomizes the life of Abraham.

IV *Faith, producing works*, is the charm and power of the apostolic church—the beautiful combination of the religion of the heart and the religion of the life. Faith in the crucified Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit were the roots of true piety, striking down deep and with a subterranean grip twining into the Rock of Ages. Above the surface towered the goodly trunk of Christian living, with all its boughs laden with "the fruits of the Spirit." Those primitive Christians combined faith and action, and aroused the pagan world

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with a double watchword. It was not enough to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The commission was, "As ye go, preach Christ." It was not enough to love him in the heart; the whole life was to be an embodiment and outflow of love. The church was not only to be sound in heart, but active in limb and sinew also. It was to be ever a militant church, contending earnestly for the truth delivered to the saints; a courageous church, standing fast for the gospel through fire and flood; a devout church, praying without ceasing; a busy church, "buying all opportunities" to save souls; a patient church, bearing one another's burdens; and a conquering church, pushing out right and left to evangelize all nations. Its model men were men of faith and action; its model women plied the needle for the poor at Joppa or carried gospels in their satchels on long, dangerous journeyings to Rome. Through the apostolic Iliad the great apostle flies, like a flaming torch all ablaze with a self-consuming zeal. At Lystra rebuking those who would pay him divine honors; at Jerusalem confronting enraged Pharisees and bigots on the castle stairs; at Cæsarea startling King Agrippa on his throne and making the guilty Felix tremble; at Rome preaching the reviled gospel in his own hired house and in Nero's palace, Paul is everywhere a splendid combination of creed and conduct, of an inward Christ-faith flowering out in an heroic service that tinges the cheeks of our modern piety with a blush of shame. Paul's faith had force in its ten fingers and might in its right arm.

Christianity is more than heart faith. It is a life, finding expression in character and service. The real test of the tree is the kind of fruit it produces. So the real test of faith is the kind of character and of conduct it produces. The outward world knows little and cares less about our creeds or our emotions. But it looks with lynx eyes at our daily lives and our conduct in earthly relations. It is clean, godly living and Christ-like action this old world is looking for and longing for.

LESSON FOR JUNE 6

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

GOLDEN TEXT: "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles."—Prov. 21. 23.

BY L. P. TUCKER

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, WALTON, NEW YORK

THIS proverb defines one letter in the alphabet of self-mastery. Whoso can control his mouth and his tongue is strong enough to master his entire nature; but whoever cannot fetter his appetite and his speech is too feeble to deliver his whole being from captivity to his passions and bring it into subjection to his higher powers. The castle of man-soul is guarded by a solitary watchman. That warder is the tongue. If the garrison can control the watchman the whole fortress is safe; but if the watchman is disloyal the whole garrison is in peril. The apostle James preached a sermon from this text which was recorded and preserved. His subject was, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man"—a complete man, reaching the goal of entire self-mastery—"and able to bridle the whole body." If anyone can control his tongue, though it be but a small part of his nature, he may master his whole being.

The power of the masters of speech is beyond estimate. It was said that a stranger could not stop under a shed with Samuel Johnson during a thunder shower without knowing that Johnson was an educated man. The country blacksmith said he always learned something from Daniel Webster while he shod the statesman's horse. A cultivated tongue is the organ of a cultivated mind, while the wisdom of the ancients declares that the tongue of the foolish poureth out foolishness.

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The world has wasted its energy in discussing whether the pen is mightier than the sword. There is no chance for discussion whether the tongue is mightier than war. The battle of words has always preceded the battle of swords. Waterloo was only the register of Parliament. By the power of the tongue Demosthenes aroused the Greeks to repel Philip of Macedon. When Demosthenes spoke only one voice was heard in Athens. By the power of the tongue Cicero awakened the conscience of Rome against the perfidy of Catiline. By the power of the tongue Peter the Hermit stirred all Europe for the Crusades to secure the Holy Sepulcher, and for three centuries armies of men and innocent children beat their breasts against the spears of the Saracens because they were bewitched by the power of an impassioned tongue. By the power of speech Napoleon inspired his soldiers to brave deeds on the sands of Africa while he reminded them that forty centuries looked down upon them from the pyramids of Egypt. It was by the power of speech that Wesley and his collaborators enlisted all England in a moral crusade, and Whitefield and Edwards moved the stolid New England of the eighteenth century till men were well-nigh beside themselves. By the omnipotence of speech Webster held the heart of the people firm to the supremacy of the nation. Had there been no mastering voice in Congress there had been no conquering sword at Appomattox. Indifference in the North had first to be conquered before rebellion in the South could be suppressed. By the witchery of speech Matthew Simpson made men forget time and place while they contemplated the victory that overcometh the world. Speech is the weapon for conquest in the kingdom of God. Its triumph will be not by an army, but by the "sword of the Spirit, which is the *word* of God." God has ordained that by the foolishness of preaching—telling the evangel—the world shall be saved. But compelling speech is mastered speech. One who is not

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himself mastered by his passion cannot master others. Paul warned men with tears night and day because he was crucified with Christ and died daily.

But this is not the whole nor the most serious power of the tongue. What the proverb in the text describes is not so much effect of speech on others as on the speaker. It is the reflex power of the tongue, its reaction on the rest of the nature. The discharge of a projectile produces a rebound on the weapon. And sometimes the kick at the breach is more serious than the wound from the muzzle. The person who takes poison on his tongue poisons his whole body. The man who puts poisonous words on his tongue corrupts his whole soul. The doctor looks at the tongue of the patient to learn the condition of the stomach and liver, and the tablet which he puts on the tongue heals the whole system. Jesus taught of the healing and wounding ministry of speech when he said, "Go into the whole world and preach the gospel. Whoever believes your speech shall be saved, and whoever rejects it shall be condemned." That was Christ's doctrine of the power of speech on the world. But he also said, "Whatever cometh out of a man's mouth defileth *him*," not society, nor the hearer only. Idle speech may or may not hurt others, but it does hurt the speaker. Foul speech not only betrayeth the man, but it befools him. The glutton digs his grave with his teeth; the tattler commits moral suicide with his tongue.

There is *personal* danger in the unnecessary silences of life. Some people talk too much and others talk too little. If there be a time to keep silence there is also a time to speak. The world has too little courteous speech. The home has too much enforced silence—thoughtless silence, perhaps. Many a lover who was effusive with compliments to his sweetheart has ceased to flatter his wife. A kind word is cheap, but it "doeth good like medicine." There is many a man who would be ashamed not to compliment the dinner on the table

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of his host who swallows in silence the one on his own table. Courtesy to those we love most ought never to become an old story. Moreover, there is too much suppressed speech in the Christian Church. Many pastors toil on without hearing any kind word for their work. Everything is taken for granted. People talk among themselves of the sermon that fed their souls, but they forget to tell the preacher. A kind word in season to many a brave man would be like ointment poured forth, and he would take up his burden refreshed. The world puts too few flowers on the table and too many on the casket. There are too scanty compliments and too effusive obituaries.

Suppressed speech, when speech is better than silence, would be serious enough if it robbed others of their due only. But it does not. Sad as it is for those who deserve it and long for it, it is worse for the one who shuts up his emotions in his own bosom. Unused organs atrophy. They remain unused until they become useless. Suppressed emotions at length die. The man who persistently keeps his feelings to himself ends by having his feelings hardened. If the singer refuse to sing he becomes unable to sing. Suppressed appreciation ends in constant ingratitude. The preacher who is put in trust with the evangel and commanded to speak in Jesus's name may refuse because his task is unpleasant or unprofitable, and the church would not be wrecked nor the kingdom halted, but the silent preacher will become a spiritual pauper. It was not hyperbole when Paul said, "Woe is *me* if I preach not the gospel." Whoso keepeth his tongue from wanton sloth keepeth his whole soul from shriveling.

Then, there is *personal* peril in the frivolities of speech. An age of prosperity is an age of frivolity. A strenuous life has its reaction in levity. It is painful to listen to the jests of a company of young people. You might suspect you were in a clique of jockeys. The frivolity of their speech would be shocking were it not

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so frothy as to be disgusting. It would be tragic were it not so shallow as to be light comedy. It *is* tragic. Light speech reacts and produces a frivolous nature. If one become a court jester he will be divorced from serious thoughts and breed levity and crucify seriousness. Foul speech befools the one who speaks it more than the one who hears it. The profane man apologizes for the word spoken unconsciously in the presence of a woman or a clergyman. He ought to apologize to his own soul. The others will forget it, he will not outgrow it. The nostrils cannot breathe foul odors without the whole nervous system being offended by the stench. It is not conversation alone that is corrupted by frivolous or filthy or caustic speech. The whole soul is cankered. It would be true if it were not in the Bible that out of your own mouth are *you* justified, and out of your own mouth are *you* condemned. Blessed is the man who keepeth his mouth and his tongue from idle words and thus keepeth his soul from corruption and the judgment of condemnation.

Men are, moreover, as much *personally* affected by the wise restraint of speech as by its wise use. History has the record of two conspicuously silent men. One was the defender of Holland's rights, William the Silent. The other was the conqueror of Vicksburg. Both had perfected complete mastery. Their whole being no less than their lips was under subjection to their higher powers. Jean Valjean burned his arm until it smoked with a red-hot iron in the presence of his captors to show them that they could not frighten him with tortures. He was his own master. These great men held their tongue to show that they could hold themselves. It is as criminal to strike with the tongue as with the fist. It is more cruel to murder a reputation than to murder a body. And as violence is the expression of hatred in the heart, so violent words are the expression of a violent temper that cannot be repressed. When Jesus was reviled, he reviled not

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again. Under the blows of the scourge and the questions of the carping high priest he answered never a word. It was the silence of one who all his life, in the presence of temptation to display of his high nature for personal ends, had overcome himself.

“Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” One cannot be master of large things unless he is of small. Paul said that he kept his body under and brought it into subjection to higher powers. As the athlete makes the hand or the foot obedient to the will, and the slave of the purpose, so one may make his speech the organ of his higher self. He speaks to edify, he keeps silent to show strength. Some tongues always babble. Like the shallow stream they flow to no purpose. They assert with those who affirm; they deny with those who forbid. They are never restrained. We wish they would sometimes stop. Others are like the millstream. They have their place of repose—a high pond of silence. But it is the silence of reserve, the pause of self-restraint. They are under self-command. They will burst it at will as they suppressed it at will. They will then put the shoulder of their whole self against the great world’s tasks, or turn the wheels in the mills of industry. Paul brooded in silence until he could restrain himself before he spoke in attention-demanding words. Luther thought long in silence before the Diet of Worms, then his speech rocked Europe. He was self-mastered. Thomas Carlyle had his bitter, silent years at Craigenputtock before he emerged in the world with *Sartor Resartus* and the French Revolution. They were spiritual autobiographies.

Watch the man who can put a lock on his lips. Fear him; admire him. He is his own master. The power that can forbear can also act. If he is mighty to compel silence he will be mighty to work righteousness. Blessed is the man who keepeth his tongue from wounding others, for he keepeth his soul from self-injury.

LESSON FOR JUNE 13

HEROES OF FAITH

GOLDEN TEXT: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."—Heb. 11. 1.

BY OLIVER W. HOLMES, A.M.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT YOUNGSTOWN DISTRICT, EAST OHIO CONFERENCE, YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

THE man who has convictions and is true to them, who accomplishes most in life, sees the invisible. Those who have wrought the noblest things of the earth have lived in two worlds: one comparatively narrow, the other limited only by the greatness of their faith in the divine word. Human lives are quickened to-day by the mere calling of the muster roll of God's heroes. There come to men mighty incentives to be true to the best within them when in such high fellowship. No two of faith's heroes lived under conditions that were the same or even similar. The power that accomplished all the mighty results indicated here was faith, which is a living trust of the souls of men in the promises of an unseen God, that he would make his word true to them and bring to pass all they had builded their lives upon. They lived, did the work that came to their hands, and never saw the realities concerning which they had trusted. They were, however, realities, and not delusions; while faith was not the substance of things hoped for, it gave assurance of the reality of such things. The substance was lying out beyond the promises of God, and faith served only to bring the comforting assurance to their hearts, but the very conditions under which a living faith overcame multiplied trials made of them men of whom the world was not worthy. Without that faith in the unseen it is utterly impossible to reach the highest goal of human attainment.

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Faith is the essential principle of soul life. The act of trust is not in itself difficult of performance and perplexing in its process. All the darkness that covers so many earnest souls lies in the very simplicity of trust. They forget that the very atmosphere without them is one of faith, as well as is the guiding principle within them. It enters into the most commonplace duties and makes life worth the living in the daily round. We trust one another in home life and in business with most perfect assurance. Yet when we come to trust God, our unseen Friend, an alien element seems to enter in and at once we are lost in the maze. We lose ourselves in the mistaken thought that God has made the act of faith an arbitrary thing, that he sets the mark and demands that we do something to please him as a test of submission on our part, when in truth the act of faith is essentially a function of the human soul, as breathing is of the body or thinking is of the mind. The exercise of the powers of thinking means mental health and growth; the proper use of the faith element in the soul is the pathway to the accomplishment of the best. It is the act that places the soul in such an attitude before God that it becomes possible for him to bestow on it the gift of life and all that goes therewith.

Faith is here given living form, not so much in what it is, but rather in what it does; characterized most briefly as to its essence, then given glorious concrete existence in living pictures. It is shown how the plastic material out of which life is made is shaped under its power and there is given to the souls of men an understanding of how the worlds were made. The story of its mighty work in the old heroic days passes in its most striking instances before our sight. Conditions change, but life remains the same and faith's power to mold has not changed. It is the intelligent looking upon life with a clear vision to-day, and not shrinking from the sweep of its possibilities but meeting its prob-

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lems with a faith in the unseen that will achieve the greatest character. Its work, therefore, is upon the life of the individual within, and to impel him to a place in the mighty movements in the life of the world without. Having attained to the highest character, it is faith that will win for us our victories. Every moral conflict that lies before us, that is to be fought out in the name of Jesus Christ, requires that same unswerving faith, and will only be won by men who believe. As one by one the great moral problems, the temperance reform, the preservation of the home, the questions of the rights of property and labor, and all the intricate questions that pertain to the relations of man to man are solved, it will be found that the leaders are men who have had visions of the face of Jesus Christ and who have done their work in harmony with his Word.

Faith has a unity of its own and a comprehensiveness in character that includes all its vital forms. The people to whom the Epistle of the Hebrews was written were evidently troubled. They felt the ground heaving and the rocks breaking and grinding under their feet. The old forms of life were passing away; the old system was fading, but here is spoken a word of comfort because the old life and the new are the same, only the old expands into the larger life of the new. The faith that has done such wonderful things in the old is the efficient power in the new. Through all the changes the one faith had given life to the mighty ones of the past. Varied as were the types among them, at the center they were the same. There was no place for questioning fear. One faith belonged to all. The climax of the whole comforting appeal was based on the declaration, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

There is apparently even now no darker subject in the realm of practical Christian living and work than that of faith. Many of God's noble saints grope on seeking for comfort and light and find them not, seek-

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ing in wrong places and ways. The division of faith into various kinds has done no good, but has occasioned perplexity and doubt. There are not various kinds of faith, though it may be manifested in many forms. One glittering point of gold dust is gold, as truly as all the accumulated gold of the treasures of the earth. Faith is a simple act of the soul, of the entire being. It may be concerning the simplest things of earth, or it may be concerning the profoundest things of eternity. It may be the trust reposed in the word of a friend for a little favor, or it may be the complete surrender of an immortal spirit for time and eternity to God. The soul action involved in the one case and the other is the same. The difference is in the character and the greatness of the object for which we trust and of the being in whom we trust. One trusts himself to a railroad, retires in a sleeper, goes through darkness and storm, crosses rivers, passes along precipices, and through tunnels, and confidently expects to awaken in safety three hundred miles from the place of starting. Another, by an act of trust, places his interests for time and eternity in the care of the loving heavenly Father and rests there, feeling that all is well and that nothing will fail. Which is the greater act of faith? It requires as great faith to perform some of the common functions of life as it does to save a soul. The forms of faith mentioned here are as many and as different as are the names on the roll, yet they all find their unity in the giving of assurance of things hoped for and the proving of things not seen. In the unity of faith in its multiplied forms there is no classification that removes a part of the things of life from under its power. But the whole has, through faith, one great purpose, though at times there are clearer evidences of an unseen presence.

We easily believe that God spoke to other peoples and to other times. So we search all lands for the evidences of his presence, while in truth the world was

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never more filled with this presence than it is to-day. He never was more in the lives of individual men and he was never more shaping the mighty currents of human life than now. Perhaps when the world has gone far enough to get the divine perspective of this time men will be able to see the faith heroes that have been living and struggling among us to-day.

Then, in addition to the things that are accomplished here faith has many of its richest gifts coming from its outlook into the future. The heathen world had its golden age and looked back to the childhood of the race. The Bible begins with the same story of sinless innocence. But the world of faith to-day is not looking backward. Its whole thought is toward the future. Our faith is such as to struggle for an ideal time before us. The home that we dream about will be to-morrow. To-morrow the world of commerce will be governed by the Golden Rule and the strife of classes will be forgotten. The intellect of man will have the freedom of truth, and every man according to the measure of his knowledge shall pass into the holy of holies and offer incense from his own heart before God. Faith says these things shall be, gives the assurance hoped for now, and makes to-day shine with the light of to-morrow.

There are things we do not see that we cannot prove by the rules that govern the ordinary movements of the mind. But faith has its own methods of proving. God himself is one of the things unseen. The intellect gives reasons and weighs arguments and balances probabilities and says it must be so. Faith reaches into the unseen and takes hold on him and the soul rests. The heart has reasons of its own.

The better land is another of the things not seen. The intellect again gives its reasons. They are many. No one of them has a force that satisfies. When combined the world has accepted their evidence because there was none better. Yet faith does for us to-day just as it did for others long ago, proves to us that there is

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a “better country,” and we go “looking for a city which hath foundations.” Faith gives us from among the unseen things a divine companionship and a heavenly land.

If we lived only for to-day, life would be poverty-stricken indeed. Just the little round of daily toil, mingled successes and failures, and that would be all. The sorrow, the suffering, the disappointment of our fellow beings, would be without meaning. But faith comes, leaves us just where we are, widens our vision, puts a meaning in all of our griefs, gives us a companionship that glorifies our way and a hope that shines like a star.

’Tis by the faith of joys to come,
We walk through deserts dark as night;
Till we arrive at heaven, our home,
Faith is our guide, and faith our light.

The want of sight she well supplies;
She makes the pearly gates appear;
Far into distant world she pries,
And brings eternal glories near.

Cheerful we tread the desert through,
While faith inspires a heavenly ray;
Though lions roar, and tempests blow,
And rocks and dangers fill the way.

LESSON FOR JUNE 20

WITNESSING TO THE RESURRECTION

GOLDEN TEXT: "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus."—Acts 4. 33.

By **WILLIAM F. ANDERSON, D.D., LL.D.**

**BISHOP OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE**

THE glimpse of the life of the early church, as furnished by the text, is most instructive. The history of the world affords no instance where the powers of darkness and of light are engaged in fiercer conflict. The scene is one of entrancing interest. The apostles, with bold and uncompromising testimony, constitute its center. We shall consider:

I. *The Witnesses.* This band of witnesses is of a somewhat indefinite number. It is made up of the apostles, and now their increasing number of followers. What a transformation has come over them. But a few days ago one, on his way to Emmaus, had voiced the spirit of all the followers of Jesus in the words, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." But their hopes had perished with the crucifixion and been buried with the smitten body of Jesus in the tomb. Following the great tragedy, their attitude had been apologetic, crouching, fearful. But now they are possessed by a supernatural zeal. Their boldness recognizes no authority except the authority of the Divine Voice within them, summoning them to the work of witnessing. Peter and John made an end of all controversy in the challenge, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Their enemies may

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threaten their life. It makes no difference. They may flaunt the authority of the Sanhedrin, and of Rome itself. Their determination is unchanged. They are held fast by an enthusiasm which knows no bounds.

If there be any way to account for this transformation which came over the spirit of the apostles during the Pentecostal days other than by the acceptance of the account given in these early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, it would be interesting to know the method. To suppose that they simulated belief in the resurrection of Jesus is not only incredulous, it is ridiculous. To suppose that they believed upon evidence insufficient is equally untenable. I have never heard any attempt to explain these facts apart from the scriptural record which did not impose upon the investigator a greater degree of credulity than the acceptance of the account here given.

II. *The Truth Attested.* The truth witnessed to was *the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.* We are impressed, as we study this early period in church history, that the theme most often discussed was "Jesus and the Resurrection"—and with great appropriateness. This question of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a very far-reaching one. The hopes of all humanity, the longings of all the ages, the destinies of the races of mankind are bound up with it. Saint Paul, in his great argument in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, stakes everything upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead:

"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

"Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

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“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”

In making sure of their ground as to the fact, the disciples were not simply solving their own problem. They were solving the problem of all hearts and of all times. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead may, with all confidence, be now accepted as the best established fact of ancient history. There is not opportunity here, in the brief space afforded, to enter fully into the argument, which to every honest person is both cumulative and convincing. The power of a living church to-day alone attests it sufficiently. Eternal life for the children of God by faith in his dear Son is no longer a debatable question. It is an assured fact, certain as God. Christ *has* “become the first fruits of them that slept.” The life of mankind is and ever must be *in Christ*. He it is who has said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

III. *The Manner of Their Testimony.* It was with great power. Why? Because they knew that Christ was risen. They knew it because they had seen him; because they had talked with him; because they had held fellowship with him. They spoke with clear certainty which was begotten by the deepest personal knowledge of the fact which they attested. Their witnessing was accompanied by magic results. Their example is a lesson to the church in every age. We hear it said in our day that there is a loss of interest in the question of a personal immortality. Some

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go so far as to say that the whole doctrine of the eternal life hangs in the balance. Whether there be ground for such a statement or not, the very statement itself is insufficient reason for the followers of Christ to give heed to it. If the general interest in the great doctrine of the eternal life be less sympathetic than formerly, the fault lies with the church itself. No great truth will die unless it first die in the heart of the church. The church of our day needs a new, vivid, realizing sense and consciousness of the eternal life. It is dangerous to allow this great central doctrine to be relegated so largely to the purely intellectual realm for discussion. To approach it from this point of view is to conceive of it as belonging to the future only, while the Scripture teaching is that the eternal life may be a present, personal experience and possession. The power of an endless life must be felt more strongly and then witnessed to more confidently by the church of our day. The church must show by its conduct that it possesses the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The minor strain is heard altogether too often—in song, in prayer, in testimony, and in sermon. "*Now is Christ risen from the dead!*" Let the fact be fully accepted and we shall have the note of victory everywhere. And then shall the joy of the Lord be our strength as in the olden time. The Christ whom we serve *lives*. A multitude whom no man can number bear testimony to this glorious fact. Christ triumphs by the power of an endless life, and so should his church. "*Jesus and the resurrection*" was the burden of the preaching of this early church, with which the apostles were associated, and the same theme must be given preëminence in every age, if the age is to be strong in faith. As preachers and teachers of the gospel of the ever-living Son of God we have little to do primarily with the speculations of science and philosophy. The hearts of men under the stress of life's burdens call for a teaching upon this important

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subject which shall beget strength for life's daily conduct. To be content to speculate about it is to weary their souls and to give them a stone instead of bread. Let us teach "with full assurance of faith."

Our great Christian poet, Browning, teaches us a lesson. One of his lovers has thus beautifully addressed him:

Thou art so sure! Thy song is fraught
With that which saint and seer have sought
In vain to demonstrate. What spirit brings
Thee surely? Others hope; thou say'st, "I know
The spirit is immortal!" And for thy confidence
In that which was our mothers' ground of trust
We thank thee—thou so nobly learn'd, so just
In judgment, thought, and feeling; so intense
In all that makes a man—we give thee praise
And thanks, thou trusting soul, midst doubting days.

The relation of this great, central, fundamental doctrine to present-day conditions demands that the church catch anew the inspiration of two great words spoken by our Lord: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." And again, "Because I live, ye shall live also."

As I have already intimated, eternal, immortal life to the sons of God is not a speculation as to the distant future. It is a present possession, a conscious experience. There is but one life and we are now living it; and those who have gone beyond share with us a life which to them has deepened and broadened, but which is the same life they lived by our side. We are not to become immortal by some mysterious change wrought at the time of death. The "resurrection" does not make us immortal. We *are* immortal; immortal life is ours to-day. The best men in all ages witness to this truth. Hear Victor Hugo, beyond the three score years and ten, in full possession of his splendid powers, exclaim: "I feel in myself the future life. I

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am like a forest once cut down. The new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever. I am rising, I know, toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. You say that the soul is nothing but the resultant of bodily powers. Why, then, is my soul more luminous when my body begins to fail? Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart. There I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets, and the roses, as at twenty years. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the world which invites me. It is marvelous, yet simple. It is a fairy tale, and it is history. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, satire, ode, and song—I have tried them all. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work,' but I cannot say, 'I have finished my life.' My day's work will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn." How a message like this thrills a man's soul with the power and richness of the life of God! Now are we the sons of God; and we are to be like him, not only in blessedness of character, but also in eternity of existence. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

LESSON FOR JUNE 27

PUTTING ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

GOLDEN TEXT: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."—Rom. 13. 14.

BY GEORGE M. SMILEY, D.D.

OF THE NEW ENGLAND CONFERENCE, SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

WHAT a mighty challenger to every Christian disciple is the apostle Paul as he constantly exhorts such to purify himself even as Christ is pure, and to purify himself until he becomes "irreprovable and unblamable" before God and man. Such an optimistic spirit as Paul's is positively contagious and becomes a real spiritual tonic to anyone seeking the best things.

Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, is a man of heroic mold. Even when he foresees through spirit-visions that "bonds and imprisonments await him" and that he goes "bound in spirit to Jerusalem," nevertheless *he goes*, and his determination to do the will of God is so absolute that he tears himself away from the love and tenderness of his converts, fearing lest a moment of self-gratulation might cause him to waver in his purpose and deter him from fulfilling God's appointed work. How often we are reminded that while religious philosophy may be essential for statement of doctrine, nevertheless "the letter killeth, but the Spirit maketh alive"; that externals can never be a substitute for the real life, and that absolutely nothing avails but "a new creation." Real Christianity, then, is a vital, spiritual life rather than a formulated creed, for the real creed of the New Testament is summed up in a single profound sentence of four words: "To live is Christ." The "new creation" in Christ Jesus changes a degenerate to a regenerate son of the living God, and, "having

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escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, he has his fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life." "The truth shall make you free," was the sentence which overarched the magnificent peristyle at the World's Fair in Chicago, but thousands upon thousands of people passed beneath this graceful arch without giving these significant words a passing thought or having the slightest conception of their spiritual import. Truth never emancipates until embodied: then all of life's faculties become liberated to be again made captive by a grander purpose. Pilate sneeringly asked Jesus the question, "What *is* truth?" as though no final answer could possibly be given; and he was in no receptive mood even if Christ had answered him as he did Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This statement has an important relation to the text and to our individual life because there is no other truth, no other life, no other way. So it can be readily seen that no man cometh to freedom but by Christ, and that no man can be robed in righteousness but by putting on the Master's seamless garment of light. The overarching of the individual soul with *life* means the undergirding of that soul with *love*. The exemplification of the graces of the Spirit in real life is the "rainbow round about the throne" of every redeemed life. The world soon discovers the beauty of a holy life, and such life becomes a challenge to every other life and a positive rebuke to unworthy living. Such a cleansed life will never for a moment hesitate in the selection of a motive or allow a compromise with conscience, and will also carefully regard the law of expediency. No true man can pool his morals, subsidize his conscience, or proxy his responsibility. In all willing hearts the indwelling Spirit of God establishes the law of life so completely that the soul loves what God loves and abhors what God condemns. What a dynamic motive such a man possesses, whether he be a merchant, a politician, or a preacher! What an imperative "*I*

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must" constantly rings out on the chimes of his soul, and duty and obligation are set to music with him, and with the psalmist he is able to say, "I *delight* to do thy will, O God." How fearlessly, too, such men stand for the right and help to steady a reeling, sordid, and fickle world. "What you are speaks so loud I cannot hear what you say," would fittingly apply to such an individual. To stand unimpeached before one's own conscience is the real "wine of gladness" to every individual life. Washed hands and a devout heart on Sunday are of little avail if those same hands do not "deal justly" and that same heart "love mercy" and keep itself "unspotted from the world" *every* day of the week. Mutilated currency can be redeemed, but counterfeit money is not only worthless but partakes of criminality. Satan cometh and findeth "nothing in us," while Christ cometh and findeth *everything* in us responding joyfully to his every demand.

This is the real putting on, or rather putting *in*, of the life of the Lord Jesus; and whenever his challenge comes, "Lovest thou me more than these?" the fearless heart gladly responds, "Thou knowest, Lord, that I love thee, and thy lambs are not neglected by me." Such a true disciple of Jesus Christ will not fail to "walk honestly," live purely, avoid excesses, in eating or drinking or in the use of the bounties of natural life. The motto of Miss Frances E. Willard, "A white life for *two*," will become enlarged into a still more comprehensive motto of "a spotless life for *all*." A completely redeemed and thoroughly consecrated man can safely "eat with publicans and sinners," with a Zaccheus of "predatory wealth," or converse with the "woman in scarlet" from Samaria, if he can truly say, "It is my meat and drink to do the will of my Father which is in heaven." Any abandoned sinner can tell a prophet by the first sentence which he utters, and if we cannot stop in the byways to point wanderers and prodigals to the Lord Jesus Christ without fear that

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our reputation will suffer thereby, there must be something the matter either with our personal consecration or our secret life.

The apostle warns us not to live in “rioting and drunkenness,” not in “chambering and wantonness,” for these are unmistakable proofs of an unregenerate life; but we are urged to walk “honestly, soberly, and righteously,” looking for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as those who must give account and not be ashamed at his coming. We are also warned against “strife and envying,” anger and retaliation, injustice and cruelty, for these are the signs of “the beast,” and not of the “Son of man.”

“Putting on the Lord Jesus Christ” would undoubtedly settle all the great world-problems, sociological, political, racial, and industrial, and would tend to unify all religious differences. Obedience to the command, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” would render certain a perfect balance between all conflicting emotions, either in ourselves or in relation to our attitude toward others. It is a startling truth that “without the *Spirit of Christ*” we are “none of his.” What a “clearing house” would be needed, even in the church of Christ, if Gabriel were sent to earth to-day to enforce this standard of judgment and to separate the “sheep” from the “goats.” Many, alas! would find that they had been following the “hireling,” and not the “good shepherd.” A self-surrendered life is also a life of the largest liberty, if surrendered to the law of life and love; for the “law of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.” The resultant forces of life and love are service and sacrifice. These were the most prominent and conspicuous characteristics in the life of our Lord, and they must certainly be emphasized in our lives. Conformity to the spirit of the world means deformity to the individual life—it cannot be otherwise; but transformity into the *Spirit of Christ* means develop-

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ment, growth, purity, righteousness, and true holiness. A half-hearted Christian is impotent in both feet, carries a withered hand, and is in danger of dying spiritually from having a weak heart. The demands of our age require a higher standard of civic honor than has obtained in the past. The newer patriotism is to be exemplified by men who have so "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" that they become subject to the dominant motive of unquestioned obedience and loyalty to the "King of kings."

A Spirit-filled life is always a *spontaneous* life, and the potency and power of this life are manifested in "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness." Against such there is no condemning law. How true it is that "If any man *willeth* to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether it be of men." Jesus in his memorable prayer in the garden of Gethsemane prayed, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." There are supreme moments and sometimes hours in one's life when the soul becomes melted with the incoming of divine love, and the gentle Spirit of Jesus broods over us and reveals to us the inequalities and inaccuracies and imperfections of our lives and they seem abhorrent and detestable to us. It is then that Jesus shows us his hands and his side and seems to look on us with a look of tender pity and compassion mingled with a shadow of pain and disappointment, and we seem to hear him say again, "Be not faithless, but believing." This is the hour when we go down into a Gethsemane twilight, and we fall upon our faces in real penitence soon to be ministered to by angelic presences and to hear once more the sweetest voice man ever heard saying, "Thou art my beloved son; this hour have I begotten thee again. Go and sin no more."

The nearer one comes to a natural death the more lucid and clear will become the vision and memory

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of life, everything appearing in its true light and in its right relationship. So the more nearly we come to the death of sin and self and the complete dethronement of every evil thought and motive, the clearer will become our vision of God and we know that "we are alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is he who really brings life and immortality to light constantly. If every life must have its Gethsemane and Calvary experiences, let us also remember that every such experience leads to a resurrection and a transfiguration, and to a spiritual ascent to a throne of authority and power within us. Guido Reni's masterpiece, "The Aurora," is significant, not because of the chariot and horses, and angelic drivers, not because of the gray light just beginning dimly to outline the distant housetops and church spires, but because of the angel in advance bearing the torch of light with which to bring in the day. God's great masterpiece of a world's redemption is the torch-bearing man filled with the inner burning flame of the Holy Spirit, who thus becomes the real "light of the world," as Jesus declared himself to be and commanded us to become. Such a light-bearing Christian, with constant oil in his lamp, drives away the darkness about him by the virtue in his own life, transfigures the common affairs of life, dignifies every menial task, exalts every motive heavenward, and by unswerving loyalty to every obligation holds himself unscathed in every association and untainted in every transaction of his life. The world expresses its appreciation of intellectual and commercial prowess by her monuments and tablets, by statuary and by "Halls of Fame," but the real "sons of God," the humble and the meek, the patient and the faithful, are those whose names are "written on his hands" and his name is written on their foreheads. They have "put on the Lord Jesus Christ."

LESSON FOR JULY 4

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY— ANTIOCH TO PHILIPPI

GOLDEN TEXT: "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."—
Acts 16. 9.

THE MACEDONIAN CRY

BY ELMER E. COUNT, A.M.

SUPERINTENDENT BULGARIA MISSION, RUSTCHUK, BULGARIA

BOTH the eyes and ears of Paul were awake. He saw a vision. He heard a call. Vision is the right word. No view of landscape or sea ever stood out before him more distinct in all its beauty than this of the man of Macedonia. Troas, where he was, was not more real to him. Ask Paul whether he ever had dreams. Aye, many of them. Ask him to distinguish between them and visions such as this. He rises at once to the ease and difficulty of the task—easy to the one who has had what he has had, difficult to the one whose undarkened eyes have never come in touch with the holy light. 'Twas easy for Luke the writer to understand. But let Paul explain it to Festus and Agrippa. Hear him wax eloquent before these men. A vision more distinct than any experience of ordinary life is still with him. Days may weave themselves into weeks, months, and years, but the view he got of Christ before the Damascus gate never fades. Listen! "At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose," etc. To such a speech as this Festus's only reply was, "Paul, thou art

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beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." To understand Paul's vision one must have Paul's experience and remember Paul's words. Spiritual things "are spiritually discerned."

But, great as the vision was, the voice was greater. Paul's visions had voices. This was a distinguishing characteristic. The sight of a man with a wishful look is much, to hear his plea is more. The plea was urgent. He had a need. His cry was for help. It came out of the night. It was darkness crying for light. 'Twas a soul in the death pangs of sin seeking a Saviour. It is the cry of a needy world. Men have found in the incident a fruitful theme for the evangelization of the world. No wonder. No stretch of the imagination is needed. There is everything in the incident—form, substance, and action—that best dovetails into the missionary spirit of the day; or, to change the figure, it is the forerunner or prophecy of a future age. Let us look at it.

It was the cry of a crisis. Crises are emergencies, climaxes, all urgent for immediate action. Here is one. The narrative runs along easily. Paul came to Derbe and Lystra. He found a certain woman and she had a son who became one of Paul's collaborators. They went through unnamed cities. The churches were established in the faith. They increased in membership daily. Then something happens that must have put the two in the spirit of expectancy. They are forbidden to preach. That would not have been startling had it come from the usual quarter of unbelief. The opposition was not there. That unseen but none the less real personality, the Holy One of God who had poured into his life of himself that Paul might be "a chosen vessel unto" himself "to bear my (his) name before the Gentiles and kings," was the very One to put an embargo upon his "preaching the word." The situation is relieved somewhat as we look a little closer. It was in Asia that Paul and his companions were forbidden to preach.

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Still a prohibition it was. Was Paul restive under the restriction? Evidently, and naturally. To be commanded not to do for his fellowmen what he had been divinely called to do would make a burning, surging soul like Paul's all restless under the circumscription. He must keep moving. He was in a spirit of expectancy. It was God's dealing with him. It was his method of preparing him for the vision. God wanted to have Paul see the importance of it. For whether Paul would see it or not, in the mind of the Divine Master there was to be stored up in that vision a chain of events that would give to Europe a Pauline Christianity. This was why Paul was not to go to Bithynia. Europe was in distress. It needed God's message. The Light of the world was needed, urgently needed, there as well as in Asia. The darkness of the night out of which came the cry could be chased away by no other power. What a crisis was there!

The world has never been without that spirit of urgency since. True, there are combinations of events and pressing circumstances that make us feel at times that special doors of opportunity fly open and God's finger points while he seems to command, "Enter!" These openings were never so numerous as to-day. Missionaries are all enthusiasts. They are simply in closer touch with the vision. Every one of them has his own. Many friends at a greater distance are having visions too. I recently sat in the office of an editor of a religious periodical. He had been around the world. Said he, "It is Korea's day." He had caught the vision. So it is. Missionaries in all countries have the same feeling concerning their fields of work. Pressing, urgent needs with peculiar privileges accompanying them stand out in pleading conspicuousness. The Macedonian cry is with us to-day from all mission fields. It louder grows in the very land from which Paul heard it. It is a constant ring in the ears of the missionary who labors there. Macedonia of the past

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reached further up into the Balkan peninsula than now. It was a bigger kingdom than the comparatively small province that goes by that name to-day. So, too, is the cry bigger than any locality. With the teeming millions in India yearning for the gospel light as never before, the cry is there. It is in Japan, awakened to feel an impulse toward national greatness directly traceable to missionary enterprise. It is among the surging masses of China's millions. It is equally loud in Korea, where the missionaries look on amazed at the marvelous things the power of God is doing for that nation. 'Tis the plea of South America too, where exigencies demand immediate attention. We could say the same thing about Mexico, the isles of the sea, and the Balkan peninsula, where but two evangelical bodies have been laboring alone for years in what is known as a most difficult field. And yet so exclusively free from hearing the gospel are Servia and Roumania that they may be called the hermit nations of Europe. The late General Conference of the Methodist Church decided to include these two nations within the boundaries of the Bulgarian Mission. No other evangelical body has yet entered these countries to preach the gospel to the natives. The late uprisings among the peoples there can be interpreted as the peoples' sense of a great need surging at their hearts. No one like the near missionaries can see the crisis and hear the cry coming from the same region heard by Paul centuries ago.

The cry indicates the human element in the problem. It was the cry of a man heard by a man. It was humanity's need calling for humanity's help. The divine element is there too in clear light. No one should ever fail to see it in problems of spreading the truth. The past has emphasized it, but has put it in a wrong light. In a town in America where I was once pastor there is a denomination that criticises the missionary effort. It has no missionary society. It has no Sabbath

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school. These, it says, are human instrumentalities. Why interfere with God's work? When he wishes the world converted he will do it. So the evangelistic passion is lost. Its numbers are constantly growing less. "Why," said one of its members to me, "you do not pretend that you can interfere with the work of God?" It was a lengthy discussion. Suffice it to say that God does need human hearts filled with himself to proclaim his truth. It is the coöperation of the divine and the human. The cry to God for help is the cry to man to carry that help. If God has a message for Macedonia Paul must bear it. That's God's method to-day. He has no other. God has done all he can to complete the plan. It now rests with his children to carry it out. What an honored privilege! While walking along the streets of Salonika, the Thessalonica of Paul's day, I came to a fountain. The Turks or Jews of the city had taken a slab of marble from the tomb of the Christians to help form it. Upon it was written in Greek, "He was the friend of Luke." Little we know now of the person whose remains once lay within the sarcophagus that is now a structural part of the fountain of Salonika. What little is known is honor so great that his burial place must tell the story to future generations. Luke's great honor was to be associated with Paul. But the greatest honor to both was that they were chosen to bear the message of the cross to the benighted peoples round about them and to distant lands.

But the cry was the plea of despair. It came out of darkness. It was more than a physical night. It was a black night for civilization in that day. The religious life of the ancient world had drunk the cup of paganism to the dregs. All they had found at last was the bitterness of despair. Society was disintegrating. The greatness of empire was fast fading away. Surely it was "the fullness of time" for God to "send forth his Son." The philosophy of the age would not satisfy.

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Theories can never satisfy the heart. The heart was made for God and will be satisfied with nothing else. Hungering hearts need to see the Christ. Paul had *him* to reveal. Paul felt that the man was in an attitude of prayer. In such an attitude he is sure to be seen. The prayerful spirit is a revealing spirit. Were the church of God on her knees more the revelation would be the greater. Not long ago I was taken to a famous church in Copenhagen to see the masterpiece of a great artist. It was Thorwaldsen's Christ. On both sides of the auditorium of the church were wonderful pieces of statuary of the twelve apostles by the same great artist. They all had their beauty. But up in front of the church elevated upon a pedestal just back of the chancel rail was the one piece that catches the eye of every visitor. It is the Christ of Thorwaldsen. The arms and hands are in the attitude of invitation. The head is poised inclining to the front. This is unsatisfactory to the observer wishing to gain a glance from that face upon which the artist had devoted so much of his time. It was unsatisfactory to me. My companion seemed to divine my feeling, and, calling me by name, said, "They tell me that the eyes of the Christ are directed toward a suppliant on his knees at the altar, and no one can get a glance from him who does not thus humbly look up into his face." I was quick to follow the hint. And then the Christ seemed to be looking with a forgiving glance at me. I then saw the beauty that the artist had stored up in the marble of that face. My eyes glanced downward toward his feet. There I read, "Follow me." The Macedonian cry was heard because it came from a prayerful heart. That child of God can best understand the loving commands of the Christ and know what it is to follow him who will listen to the words in the mellowness of a prayerful spirit. To follow him is to understand his words, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

LESSON FOR JULY 11

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY—THE PHILIPPIAN JAILER

GOLDEN TEXT: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."—Acts 16. 31.

SIN AND SALVATION

BY SAMUEL GARDINER AYRES

LIBRARIAN OF DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MADISON, NEW JERSEY

EVERY prison experience recorded in the Bible is worthy of study. Many times have saints been subject to imprisonment. Nearly always have good results seemed to follow from their imprisonment. John Bunyan would never have given us his matchless creations in Pilgrim's Progress if it had not been for his imprisonment in Bedford Jail. In the case before us good results came through the imprisonment of two missionaries. A church was founded.

As we study this sermon preached to the jailer we find very much in the simple expression as given in our text. There is material for several sermons. Let us study: 1. The implications of the text. 2. Its teachings. 3. The results.

I. *The Implications of the Text.* Every great expression of truth has more to it than the thought as expressed. Take the Ten Commandments and study them carefully and you will find an underlying truth equal in value to that which is first apparent. The same is true of the Beatitudes, of the Creed, and of the Lord's Prayer. Thus when we say "Our Father," we imply sonship and brotherhood, two truths coördinate in power and value with that of the Fatherhood of God. In this text are many such implications. We name five:

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1. There is something from which to be saved—sin.
2. There is a possibility of salvation.
3. There is a longing to be saved common to every man who has within him the least spark of goodness left. Such a longing we find well expressed in the poem of H. L. Gordon, entitled “Byron and the Angel,” when he makes Byron say:

O this thirsting, thirsting hanker!
O this burning, burning canker!
Driving peace and hope to shipwreck—
Without rudder, without anchor,
On the reef rocks of damnation!

The very despair is an expression of longing.

4. This salvation is unrestricted except by rejection.
5. The greatness and power of Jesus Christ is also one of the great implications.

II. *The Direct Teachings of the Text.* 1. Belief is a necessity for every man. Even those who say that they are agnostics have their creed. Negation is belief. The human mind is so constituted that it must believe. Belief is a common business principle; it is also a principle of nature. So also the spiritual realm is governed by the same law. Credulity is the abuse of the principle and is the explanation of much fanaticism and failure. Superstition is the extreme of faith. But “without faith it is impossible to please God.” We would add that without faith it is impossible to please man. What a wonderful principle it is, so implanted in every heart! Even the liar lies to be believed. It is a law to which we are amenable whether we will it or not.

2. Belief in a higher power is a necessity. Nearly all men would consent to our first proposition. Fewer would consent to this. The man of experience, with a desire to be good, and who has tried to attain by his own efforts, will assent to this proposition. It is beyond the power of man to live a true life unaided by a higher power. To those who know not our God as we know

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him, the same is true. There are many noble heathen. Their very ideals are a help to them. Many years ago James B. Walker wrote a wonderful book entitled The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation. In this he elaborates the thought that we become like that which we worship. The miser becomes sordid and hard; the devotee of fashion becomes frivolous; the lover of the good becomes pure and good. It is necessary, therefore, that there be a belief in something better to bring out our best. Not only is this a psychological fact, but it is a fact of experience. The highest goodness is super-human. It goes beyond the dreams of poet or prophet. The very ideal is God-given.

The thought of a higher being is a universal idea. Now and then some one arises and declares that they have found a race which had no idea of a superior power. For years we heard that the natives of Patagonia were without any idea of a supernatural being, but careful investigation proved the contrary. Then some one thought that the same was true of the Bushmen of Australia, but again the statement was disproved. Sometimes the thought has been so distorted that it is hardly recognizable. A demon takes the place of a God and must be placated to win success. Yet the thought of a higher being is never absent.

3. Belief in Jesus Christ is a necessity. Many men who accept the first two propositions we have given will emphatically deny this one. Some will do so absolutely. Others give a partial assent in acknowledging the power of the great example of the life of Jesus Christ to uplift the individual life and humanity. We cannot place too great an emphasis on this truth. But it is only a part of the great doctrine of the supreme excellence of Jesus Christ. To different minds belief in him includes different facts, depending largely upon their belief or denial of his divinity. To our thought there are four essential facts necessary to acquire salvation through Christ: (1) A belief in the historic

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Christ; (2) a belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ; (3) a belief in the humanity of Christ; (4) a belief in the atonement of Jesus Christ for our sins. There are a few who cry out that the doctrine of the atonement is out of date, and add that it is a fable, a tradition, received from a heathen age when bloody sacrifices were offered to appease the wrath of an angry god. There must be a superhuman victory in order to achieve a supernatural goodness. Such a victory was gained on the cross. The weakest mortal on the face of the earth can now come to the throne of God, pleading the merits of the Son of God and receive pardon and power to become *a son of God*. He goes forth to live the miracle of a good life. There is no greater miracle in the annals of men than that of the redeemed life of Jerry McAuley. How simple it all is! Just believe and accept him.

III. *The Results.* We have incidentally given some of the results in our discussion above. The chief result is the saved man himself. He is saved from sin. Let us see what that means. Sin means many things. Some express it by one figure, others by another. We have taken pains to collect the various figures descriptive of sin. A study of them will reveal the awfulness of sin and its sadder results. We name only a few: To one it is a wild animal crouching by the door, lying in wait ready to spring upon the master of the house, and to bury teeth and claws in the exposed throat of the man as he comes through the open door. To another it is a trap door in the cell of the heart; if the door is stepped upon it precipitates into darkness and oblivion. To a third it seems that sin rivets the fetters which bind the victim to the dank wall of a noisome dungeon, wherein all manner of loathsome and creeping things crawl to terrify the occupant. To a fourth it closes fast the door which leads to opportunity, advancement, and life. To Henry van Dyke it is "the shadow on genius." To another it is a horrible hydra-

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headed monster devouring the innocent with the guilty, devastating the land, and bringing famine and death. To some it is a never-ending night, peopled with monstrous shapes and alive with horrible impulses. To the writer of the book of Proverbs it is "bitterness of heart." To Paul it is the "sting of death." To another it is a precipice on the brink of woe and hell. If a man fall over, his rescue is uncertain. If a friendly hand is not reached forth to save he may be dashed to death on the rocks below. To another it is hell within the heart, torment within the bones, never-dying fire within the veins; a living death, a never-dying life of torment. To one and all it is awful in its results. No wonder Paul cries out in his sympathy with the sinner, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thank God, there is hope for the worst sinner of us all.

2. In a similar way the word "saved" may be illustrated: (1) Saved is the lost found, whether it be the lost sheep, the lost coin, or the lost boy. (2) It is the wanderer found. The father finds his son; the shepherd the sheep. A modern instance comes to mind as we write. As far as we know it has never been in print. A man went wrong and slipped down into the depths. He had been handsome, talented, and respected. His fall was the tragedy of a home; his disgrace the skeleton in the closet. He was not heard from for many years, and it was thought after a time that he was dead. But he had a sister who did not give up the idea that he was still alive. After much thought about him she determined to go and find him. She went to New York and night after night she made the rounds of the saloons, accompanied by a policeman. Wherever she went she always sang a song which their mother had often sung to them in their childhood, hoping in this way to secure his attention and recognition. Weeks passed by, but at last he was found, a wreck of his former self and in ill health. His sister

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took him to his old home in Vermont, there to spend his last days. It was the patience and love of the sister that found him. The love of Jesus Christ would find every wanderer. The brother might have remained unnoticed and unrecognized if he wished. How many wanderers fail to be discovered by Jesus Christ because they do not desire him to find them. (3) Saved means the coming of the great physician to cure the sin-sick soul. (4) Saved means the giving of hope to the hopeless. The message of salvation saves the would-be suicide. The wisdom of this message when given is shown by the wonderful work of the Anti-Suicide Bureau of the Salvation Army. Scores have been saved by this agency from the sin of despair. (5) Salvation is the outreaching of the arms of everlasting love to rescue the man abandoned in the valley. There seems no way to scale the rocks, but the friendly arms are strong to lift to a place of safety. "Love never faileth." (6) Salvation is the revival of the dead. How wonderful is the resurrection in the life of a newly converted man. He wishes to do and be. The sluggard is slothful no more. The shiftless man is now strong with ambition. The world has changed. Even nature has a different appearance. (7) Another result is that the crown of salvation is eternal life and all that it implies—companionship with the good, with God and Jesus Christ for evermore.

There is another short phrase at the end of the verse—"and thy house." The offer was not only to the jailer, but also to the rest of his household. It does not imply, as some would have it, that the rest were saved by his faith without faith on their part. Some people in our time live as if one saint in the family would save all the rest. The son of a saint needs to believe as well as another. God has been lavish with his love, but he does not compel men to be saved. He stands and says, "Come unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved."

LESSON FOR JULY 18

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY— THESSALONICA AND BEREA

GOLDEN TEXT: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."—Psa. 119. 11.

THE FRUIT OF THE HIDDEN WORD

By FRANK CLARE ENGLISH, D.D.

PRESIDENT MOORES HILL COLLEGE, MOORES HILL, INDIANA

THE words of this Golden Text contain the master secret of a successful life. Every incident in a man's life is a link which requires this connection with God to make a well-rounded and complete chain that will hold in the midst of the soul's anguish. Whether it be the psalmist harassed by contending foe, Paul encountering difficulties, or any modern reformer confronted by obstacles almost insuperable, the only safety is hiding in the Lord. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the word hid in it is not concealed. It is buried deep that it may be safely and firmly rooted and grow high and strong. It is placed at the head of the fountain that it may send forth a pure stream. The psalmist had not only sought God in his heart, but had hid his law there as its best treasure, and as an inward power controlling and stimulating his actions. Evil cannot flow from a heart in which God's word abides.

There are two classes of Christians: those who live on the outskirts of his pavilion and only approach the throne of his presence when driven by calamity, and those whose lives are always inseparable from his. The life that lives apart from God ever strays from the right. A caravan loses its way; soon there come a sense of the loss of the track and hunger and thirst. The food

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is exhausted, the water skins empty, exhaustion of body and despair of soul follow. In their distress they are driven to God, who never fails to hear in times of calamity. Suddenly the way appears, God has taken his position at the head of the march, and their Guide brings them to safety and plenty. The life that dwells in the secret of his presence is always calm. The elements may conspire, the storm rage, the tempest beat furiously, but he smiles at Satan's rage and is undisturbed by adversity. Nothing can dislodge such a life but personal consent. This close walk with God is not a theory or an ideal, but a reality in the experience of many; while the word of God is ever rich with blessing, a safeguard to the trusting, and has never failed as an unfailing guide into all truth.

I. A Positive Vision of Duty. A vision is an inward view which is broader, larger, grander than the bodily eye can see. It is what the soul beholds when it flies beyond the sagging senses. Sin is the only thing that separates man from God. It obscures the vision of holy things, of truth, of our relations to God and man and the pathway of duty. Take sin out of the world and there are love, joy, righteousness. "In his presence is fullness of joy." There is nothing so great in all the world as his love, and his smile lights up the heavens. Man could have all this enjoyment at the hand of the Lord if sin were not in the way. All sin is folly, it is the most unreasonable thing in the world.

The people of Thessalonica were full of malignant criticism and ready to do personal violence. The reason is plain, they were not willing to have the word and did not like to retain God in the heart. But the people of Berea, more noble than these, delighted themselves in the word. It revealed the truth and gave them a positive vision of duty—to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour and his followers as their brethren.

The word of God illuminates the soul. The word is light. Light and darkness cannot occupy the same

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place. The word reveals the truth and shows the path of duty. No man can ever do a really great thing until he has seen a great vision or ideal. Michael Angelo building Saint Peter's, Christopher Wren building Saint Paul's, Martin Luther reconstructing Europe, are examples. Paul never ventured into Europe until, at Troas, he saw the vision. Many people are disciplined by the unrealized vision always before them. The Israelites had been led to the edge of the land of Canaan and shown the valleys and hills and luxuriant vegetation, then were bidden to turn away into the desert, where they were kept in sorrow for forty years. But that vision kept them in the path of duty until they came to greater realizations in a better world. The word of God is the safeguard from sinning. It becomes a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. The lamp is for night and the light shines in the day, so the word is for night and day. If we trust in the word we are as willing to accept help to bear afflictions as help to remove them. If we wish to make advances in God's school we must not complain of the guides and teachers to whom he commits us.

II. *A Positive Principle of Right.* The word of God will reveal positive principles of right. The discovery of a right implies that there is also a wrong. Right is based upon desire. Love is a desire. The proper use of love is very important. Concerning the nature of a right one has said, "Every one has a right to gratify his normal desires so long as he does not interfere with the rights of another." But some nations and people will assert some things as rights and privileges that will be disclaimed by others. Hence we cannot look for the principle of right and justice in the constitution of man. The opinions of men vary so greatly that there is no common ground of appeal found among men. God alone is the final ground. This final appeal is not to the *will* of God, but to the attributes of his *nature*. A God constituted simply

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of will would never meet the human need, for the will might change or he be a tyrant. The attributes of God are truth, justice, righteousness, love. Therefore it is impossible for him to lie, or do an unjust thing or wrong a soul. In myriads of ways the word reveals his nature, so that to hide his word in the heart is to have the nature or supreme essence of divine goodness within. This gives one the positive principle for right doing.

God is always looking for a man whom he can trust, a man who has adjusted and conformed himself to the requirements of his kingdom. Everyone should form the habit of searching the Scriptures daily. Forming a good habit is of supreme importance, a habit of meditating upon holy things and performing good deeds. Now, the way to form a good habit is, first, to form the resolution; second, seize the first opportunity to perform it; third, never allow an exception to occur. Begin now, while you are young, to form good habits; it is not slavish, but is the secret of making life easier. The positive principles determine whether a man shall lead a life of virtue or vice. The virtuous life is the overcoming life. It is acquired by substituting something better for that which is lower. But let the individual neglect these higher things, the will becomes weakened, the heart a receptacle of evil, and a life of vice ensues.

The only safety is God. His word is truth. It makes us free. It is a chart to keep us in the right way. We are not left to experiment. Every child has a Teacher, every traveler a Guide. Read the Book. Let it be your counsel and guide. Read the old family Bible; perhaps your name is there, your parents' names. Be careful to read the pages that are worn and have been turned most. Other feet have trod this road. Perhaps a gilded way has appeared, but the old beaten paths are safest. There are some famous gates in Florence which Angelo declared fit for the gates of paradise. They are

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covered with exquisite pictures and noble imagery in bronze. These gates were once gilded with gold; but the centuries have worn away the gold. Still the splendid work of the great artist abides in the solid bronze, and is all the more impressive in its own undecorated simplicity. So years may remove the gilt of us all, but inwrought graces and noble deeds abide untouched by time, and positive principles of noble character will abide forever.

III. *A Positive Path to God's Preferment.* Hiding the word or Christ-life in the heart is not to overwhelm it; as well think of vegetation being destroyed by the sun. The sun's mass is over seven hundred times that of all the planets put together, its diameter is eight hundred and sixty thousand miles, its heat and brilliance beyond description. But it is no burden to the daisy, it does not break the stem of the plant, the violet, or the rose.

It is doubtful whether one will choose the path of life unless that life has an aim. As the artist sees the finished picture before beginning it, so we see the finished picture in Jesus Christ. With this life before us we must strive to be pure in thought and deed. His word furnishes us the purest thought. Our thoughts determine our action and fix our destiny. The word of God finishes one's education.

Some men are chosen because they are in harmony with the person or movement so choosing. Others are chosen because of their eminent qualifications, and with the hope of interesting them in the movement proposed. John illustrates the first, Paul the second. There is just one condition, namely, absolute conformity. People often wonder why one person receives recognition and another does not. Why did Lincoln choose Stanton, and Grant choose Rawlins, and Roosevelt choose Taft? They said that Havelock leaped into fame in a day when he distinguished himself at Cawnpore and Lucknow. The same might be said of Thor-

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waldsen and Webster. But they forget the years of patient toil spent by these men, and all who have become truly great.

A saint is not made in a day. The pattern is seen in the mount but the tabernacle is made in the valley. In our private and public devotions we receive the strength and inspiration to go out and perform the task. If we do our work well we will see more when we return to the word of God. Having learned more, with fresher courage we go out for still greater victories. This is making life a perpetual achievement of success. I have seen boys and girls coming from homes of adversity and entering upon a college course. Faithfully they attended the Christian Association meetings, the church prayer meetings, the Bible classes, and in all their ways they acknowledged Him. And God always honored them. It has been thrilling to see them overcoming difficulties, mastering hard problems, achieving an education, and finally with this accomplishment and the much-longed-for diploma going forth, a little better than when they came in, to fill some important position in life. Such graduates receive preferment. It is the reward of God and man.

The pathway to recognition in his kingdom is entire surrender. Nothing will so surely lead to failure as an attempt to pledge God in advance. We have his word now, and nothing so pleases him as an active faith in the word. It should be the burning desire of every devout heart to know him. That brilliant girl Marie Bashkirtseff once wrote in her diary: "It is the new year. At the theater, precisely at midnight, watch in hand, I wished my wish in a single word, intoxicating whether written or spoken—Fame!" But if men would stand at midnight, or rather at the opening of each new day, Bible in hand, and with the wish of their hearts might it not better be, The path of righteousness to the city of God and the spirit of human helpfulness all along the way?

LESSON FOR JULY 25

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY— ATHENS

GOLDEN TEXT: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—John 4. 24.

THE RELIGION OF THE SPIRIT

BY ISMAR J. PERITZ, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES AND WILLARD IVES PROFESSOR OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE, SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, SYRACUSE, NEW YORK.

WHEN the apostle Paul addressed his Athenian audience, the representatives of two of the most potent forces of our civilization—Greek philosophy and culture and Hebrew-Christian religion—met in combat. There may be difference of opinion as to whether Paul told the men of Athens that they were "too superstitious," "somewhat superstitious," or "very religious," but there can be no doubt that he was thoroughly convinced that there was something radically wrong with their religious conceptions, and that he had come to them with the very definite purpose of setting them right. And while not entirely ignoring that there might be good elements in Greek culture, he regards it his main duty to point out its shortcomings and faults. With the warmth and courage of one of the old prophets he lays bare the incompetency of idolatry and heathenism, and announces the most exalted conception of the nature of God and our relation to him, well summarized in the Golden Text, chosen from another, but similar, situation. For whether it be a common Samaritan woman or a Greek philosopher, all alike have to learn from God's special agents of revelation that it is the religion of the Spirit that is the true religion.

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I. *The religion of the Spirit is a protest against carnalism.* It is very important to realize the nature of idolatry in order to appreciate why the prophets hated and fought it so, and why "while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he beheld the city full of idols." Idolatry is in its essence nature worship in which the male and female principles in nature are symbolized, deified, and served. The ceremonialism of this worship found expression in the sacrificial meals at harvest festivals or similar occasions, when men and women gave vent to their lowest animal passions—this being done under the sanction of religion. God, as it were, became the patron of the devil's work. This is the reason why the prophets, like Hosea (4. 11-14), for instance, cry out against it, and spare not; and why Paul in Romans (1. 18-21) paints the moral and religious condition of the heathenism of his time in such hideously dark colors. Idolatry, in other words, is man under the control of the flesh or the beast in him, and the reign of lust, jealousy, anger, hatred, and malice.

It must be admitted, in all fairness, that Greek, like other heathenism, had its choice spirits that did not thus live on lowest planes, and taught others not to do so, like Socrates and Epictetus; and it is also true that the architectural and sculptural beauties of Athens, with which Paul found himself surrounded in the Agora and Acropolis, the Parthenon, for instance, and the statues of a Praxiteles or Pericles, over a segment of which, or a torso, or a head or limb, modern artists, archaeologists, and the authorities of national museums become wild with enthusiasm, by no means originated in the interest of vice. But Paul was a practical man, valuing things first by their influence upon the moral life of the individual and the community, and possessing an inbred Jewish aversion against all plastic forms, symbolizing the divine, born out of a painful national experience. It was thus in the interest of a high ethical

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life that his spirit was stirred when he saw the city full of idols. The religion of the Spirit, therefore, lays chief emphasis upon the ethical life of man; and seeks to attain to the highest forms of morality.

But in the effort of attaining moral perfection, it recognizes man's dual nature, the physical and the spiritual; the place of each; and their mutual interdependence. It is fully conscious of the antagonism of the higher and lower natures in man, as so graphically depicted, and most probably from his own experience, by Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans; it knows the weakness of the flesh and the need of the Master's warning: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." It may differ as to the origin of this antagonism: some literally tracing it back as the "inbred sin" inherited from Adam's fall; others seeing in it the tendency to revert back to a lower stage in the development of man; but alike conscious of its dread weight, and crying, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" But it knows also of the shout of victory over sin: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"; and of the life of the Spirit according to the eighth chapter of Romans: free from condemnation; walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; by the Spirit putting to death the deeds of the body; led by the Spirit of God; crying, Abba, Father; and the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit, that we are children of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

But while the religion of the Spirit thus aims to avoid the extreme of a carnal libertinism, it aims equally to avoid the extreme of asceticism: it is neither Epicurean, in the popular sense, nor Stoic, but Christian. It does not hold that matter is evil in itself; but it takes the body as much a gift of God as the spirit. It holds that man's nature is an organic unity; and while we may in thought separate the physical from the men-

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tal and spiritual, they are in actual life closely intertwined, so that whatever affects the one for good or evil affects the other likewise; and that the highest Christian ideal is to seek the most perfect development attainable of each and all.

II. *The religion of the Spirit is a protest against materialism.* It is to be observed that the main part of Paul's discourse before his Athenian audience concerned the character of the Supreme Being. Taking occasion in the aptest manner of the altar with the inscription "To AN UNKNOWN God," Paul made known to them the God of biblical revelation, Hebrew monotheism: God as the creator of the universe; a spiritual person; author and sustainer of life; controlling by his providence the destinies of nations; having made man in his own image, as the "offspring of God"; and ruling the world with purposes of righteousness, culminating in the person of Jesus Christ. It was a philosophical sermon, in which Paul apparently departed from his customary preaching of Christ crucified; but appropriate to the cultured audience; and needful, for the popular conceptions were pantheistic and polytheistic; and far from the truth that he was able to declare.

And as then so now, a proper conception of God, of man, and the universe is essential to highest living. Who is it that says audibly or by the life he lives, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"? Is it not he that is without God and hope in the world, and considers the universe and himself mere creatures of chance? But he whom the conviction has seized that there is in the world, as Mr. Arnold expressed it, "a Power not ourselves making for righteousness," has come into personal touch with it, and has entered in a measure at least into the glorious design and purposes of our almighty Father, he finds a higher meaning in life, and seeks the noblest ends in it. Every man is a philosopher of some kind, whether he knows it or not; and the trend of his conduct reveals whether he believes

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that matter is his god or that "God is Spirit." When individual or national life runs into materialism, there is something wrong with faith in God; and there is a mission of the religion of the Spirit to preach Paul's doctrine that man is the spiritual offspring of God, and that "we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man." Here lies the solution of our pressing social and economic problems. Manhood and womanhood are worth more than houses and lands; and dollars and cents do not tell the value of a man. Vast commercial enterprises are excellent things, and so are wealth and prosperity; but honesty and brotherliness are more excellent things: and if a man is face to face with a choice between the two, and he appreciates the value of spiritual things, he will seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and take the other things as they come. Righteousness exalteth a nation; and where there is no vision the people perish. The religion of the Spirit exalts the faith of him who endures, as seeing Him who is invisible, and accounts the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Spiritual idealism is the great need of our time.

III. *The religion of the Spirit is a protest against formalism.* The human heart craves for intercourse with the Divine, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. This accounts for altars erected to "an unknown God," and the countless sufferings men have undergone in their groping to find God. But those who might be expected to lead the blind have often added to the confusion. Imagine the poor Samaritan woman standing in utter perplexity and inquiring: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship," and she is the sample of the host of humanity that cry out, "Stop your ceremonial and doctrinal quibbling, and tell us how we may find God." Hear then the Master's answer: "The hour cometh"—the hour of God's highest

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revelation of himself in his Son—"when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem"—geographical and racial limitations vanished—"shall ye worship the Father"—note well the name for God—Father—implying a universal brotherhood on the basis of a universal fatherhood of God. "True worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth"—that is, with heartfelt freedom and spontaneity, and independent of any particular locality, symbol, or form, but, above all, with moral purpose. "God is a Spirit," and only spirit can commune with spirit, or find contact in thought and purpose. "The Most High dwelleth not in houses made with hands," which corresponds to Paul's statement, "In him we live, and move, and have our being." The kingdom of God is within you.

But while it is thus clear that genuine religion is essentially spiritual, men have ever tried to force it into one form or another, whether of ceremonialism or doctrine, and offer it as a substitute for living in conscious communion with God. Thus Pharisaism in the Jewish Church and sacerdotalism and dogmatism in the Christian Church have each in their turn endeavored to set bounds to the Spirit. But spiritual energy, like all life, needs room and freedom for growth, and it will adapt itself to all conditions and climes. But some are afraid that they will allow too much freedom to the Spirit; and they insist that he do exactly now as in former generations. But the religion of the Spirit insists that where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty; that it is the letter that killeth, but the Spirit that giveth life; and that neither for the individual believer nor for the church of Christ as a whole is exhausted the Master's promise: the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all the truth.

The religion of the Spirit, then, provides (1) for the consecration of our bodies as the temples of the Spirit; (2) for the highest ideals in life; and (3) for intellectual freedom under the guidance of the Spirit.

LESSON FOR AUGUST 1

CLOSE OF PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

GOLDEN TEXT: "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John 16. 33.

BY EDWARD J. KNOX, D.D.

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, GREENSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

THE Revised Version reads: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This verse sums up Christian experience. No essential feature is wanting—peace in Christ, tribulation and hopefulness, and courage through Christ's victory over the world. Jesus knew that the disciples would soon forsake him and that he would be left alone. Yet he says, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." He does not emphasize a future companionship with the Father, but a present one. We can understand the mission of Jesus better by meditating on his habitual references to his union with the Father. The omniscience, the authority, the majesty, and the peace of Jesus have their source in his oneness with the Father. Nothing he does or says is without the Father. This is the source of the truth of his judgment. Men boast of their freedom; Jesus, of his dependence on the Father. Men mourn over their mistakes; Jesus said: "And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me."

Jesus is not the revealer of truth. He is the truth. He is not the revelation of God. He is God manifest in the flesh. God through him is seeking his rebellious wandering children. When Jesus was about to be

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taken from his disciples he spoke these things. They imperfectly understood them. He had told them that if he went away he would come again. The church throughout the weary ages has watched and waited for his coming. It has often overlooked the present tense of his legacy of peace, and has fixed its eye on the future, and has made the end of the world the goal of its hopes. Centuries passed before men truly read here that the way to heaven was not outside of this world, but in it. Their eyes were holden to what Dante so clearly saw, that there is a coming of Christ into every believer's soul and that the surrendered will becomes the seat of Christ's kingdom. It is not a Christ after the flesh, but a spiritually present Christ, who is revealed to us. His farewell words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace," are expressive of completeness. The promise of the coming of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, did not mean that another system of truth or a Saviour different from the one the disciples saw and heard was to be revealed. "For he shall speak not of himself . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." Jesus sought to impress the disciples with the sufficiency of himself and the gospel for the world's salvation. When Jesus asked the disciples, "Do ye now believe?" there was warning in his question. Had they the faith that would sustain them in the coming separation? Have we the faith to trust an unseen Christ? to believe in a gospel that has been preached to the generations? Do we believe that he has overcome the world? Has the gospel preached unto our fathers, the church established by him, so lost power that Jesus must come in royal guise and take charge in person of the world's redemption? May we have peace in him as he was—as he is? or must we in despair wait for another manifestation? These

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anxious questions answer themselves as we study Christ more deeply and trust him more fully. For as Reith well says: "The character of Christ corresponds to the ideal of human nature which we all instinctively have; he is man as man ought to be; his life reflects perfect love and duty to God and man. Over all the generations of men he towers up, the goal of every true aspiration. The world can never overtake him or leave him behind. To be like him, to see him as he is, to behold his glory, to be with him where he is, are simple but profound ways of expressing the fact of Christ's fulfillment of every human ideal and hope."

Jesus promises peace in himself. He had already spoken of his legacy of peace. He had it to give. His own peace was the result of his love for and communion with the Father. Peace was the only legacy he had to leave his own. "Peace be unto you," were his first words to them after his resurrection. "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace the world gives is dependent on changing conditions over which it has no control. Men toil and save and bequeath estates to their children, and then lie down on their beds happy in the thought that their loved ones will never be "chased by the dry wind that blows from painful poverty"; but riches take wings to themselves and fly away, or oftentimes become the means of a luxurious and unworthy life which destroys every noble ideal. The world gives fame and honor. History's pages record the sorrows of earth's greatest ones. For a man of genius to have used his high gifts in such a way as to secure a second life in the grateful memories of men, for a lawgiver to have made even-handed righteousness possible for the weak and helpless, for the man of wealth to have made the lot of millions easier, or the statesman to have made luminous the path of man's progress, cannot but bring satisfaction. But neither station, fame nor honor, however worthily gained, is in itself a shield against the

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calamities of life. We recall at once the lament of Edmund Burke over his dead son: "The storm has gone over me; and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honors, I am torn up by the roots and lie prostrate on the earth. . . . I am alone. I have none to meet my enemies in the gate. I greatly deceive myself if in this hard season I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame and honor in the world."

In the words of Jesus we do not catch the accents of pity, but the martial notes of courage and hope: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." To his disciples he said, "In the world ye have tribulation; be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Human nature never rises so near to the divine as when it tramples self-pity. Weakness finds pleasure in the subtle but tragically demoralizing exercise of self-pity. The surgeon's sympathy for suffering makes alert his brain and steady his skillful hand for its relief. When Ulysses cries out, "Endure, my soul, endure; far worse hast thou already borne," winds and waves give way before him. Henley sings,

Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.

The sentimentalist takes much away from Jesus when he represents him as mournfully sighing over the hopelessness of the human lot. True, he compassed this world's sorrows as none other. His visage was more marred than any of the sons of men. He wept over Jerusalem, but it was because she knew not the time of her merciful visitation, nor the things that belonged unto her peace. Her children would not let him gather them to himself. Above all the want, weariness, and disquietude of life comes the voice of Jesus saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,

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and I will give you rest." The emphasis is on "I will give you rest." He saw the wide reign of spiritual death. His lament was, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." For his disciples he prays, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He told his disciples, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Not ease, not worldly fame, but peace in the midst of tribulations, was his promise, his legacy, to all believing souls. Avoiding the unpleasant shrinking from sacrifice, seeking one's own pleasure develops the Tito of George Eliot's *Romola*, but not a hero.

Yet not the less
I hold, it is the toils I knew, the pains
I bore for others, which have kept the heart
Of manhood undefiled, and nerved the arm
Of sacrifice and made the martyr strong
To do and bear.

We have no portrait of Paul. The cares of the churches, perils by land and sea, false brethren, his five scourgings, prisons oft, hunger and nakedness, and his dying daily doubtless left many a scar and many a wrinkle, yet we read of him sorrowing yet always rejoicing. He sings in prison. He thanks God and takes courage after shipwreck as he goes toward Rome. Afflictions were to him God's levers, and the afflictions were light, the levers long, for they attached themselves to the eternal weights of glory. Dr. John Brown, as great a painter with words as was Raphael with colors, draws a picture of Ailie, the carrier's wife in *Rab and His Friends*: "Eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it." What a hint is here for the one who would attempt to paint Paul!

We can through faith in Christ receive his peace as our own. This is his promise. This is our calling—

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“a calm path which lies before the feet.” Life sooner or later becomes bitter. Parting on parting break down our sheltering towers. Our friends leave us, “gone is the day of their returning.” Human consolation is vain, and earth’s tapers flicker and die out in the midst of shadows which lift not. Philosophy has no certain path for the way in which madness lies. But when we believe in Jesus,

The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.

Charles Wesley reached his greatest height when he wrote:

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in thee I find.

LESSON FOR AUGUST 8

PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO THE THES- SALONIANS

GOLDEN TEXT: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good."—1 Thess. 5. 15.

THE HETEROPATHIC TREATMENT OF MORAL DISEASE

BY GEORGE W. KING, Ph.D.

PASTOR PEOPLE'S TEMPLE, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

IN the chapter from which the text is chosen the apostle brings to our attention four different lines of Christian thinking. In the preceding chapter he has been considering the question of the advent, or second coming of our Lord, and the comfort there is for the Christian in the hope and prospect. In the first verse of the chapter of the text he says: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you," and warns that the day of the Lord will dawn unexpectedly. Then follow certain exhortations of a higher Christian character, after which come the more practical admonitions of verses 12-22. Verses 23 and 24 contain a theological statement of the source of our strength for the accomplishment of the exhortations. The text is given among the practical admonitions of the middle section of the chapter, and is among the most important instructions for daily Christian living.

I have chosen to call my subject The Heteropathic Treatment of Moral Disease, and I wish to consider the moral method, its limitations, and its effects.

I. *The Moral Method.* 1. The method was but imperfectly known among the heathen of Christ's day. The Greeks were noted for their inveterate animosities. Aristotle taught that "if a man must not retaliate,

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his condition appears to be as bad as slavery." The thought of the heathen world to-day is little, if any, better; for the negative heathen precept, "Do not unto others what you would not they should do unto you," is compatible with the general feeling of revenge practiced among them, and is a whole diameter opposed to the Golden Rule of the New Testament. The Jews but faintly comprehended the method taught by Christ and the apostles, and in its fullness of teaching it is undoubtedly Christian. With Christ and the apostles it was a matter of reiterated instruction.

2. The method is non-natural, but rational; non-natural in the sense that it is contrary to our first feelings and impulses; rational in that it commends itself to our better thought and feelings and has been productive of unlimited good in its imperfect observance.

3. The method is not an easy one and can only be observed in its fullness of practice by the enabling power of divine grace.

4. It is the divine method of curing the world's sin. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man [one who adds goodness to his righteousness] some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners [enemies], Christ died for us."

II. *The Limitations of the Law of Hetero-Moral-Therapeutics.* The question will arise, Are there any limitations to the law of nonretaliation and nonresistance and "ever" following that which is "good" "to all"? Mr. Tolstoi would inculcate "No" as an answer. Others would say the right of self-defense is Christian; that war is at times justifiable and personal resistance necessary. The Master certainly set a limit to the law of nonresistance when he said, "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,

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lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." But we must be careful to catch the spirit of this limitation, lest we lose the whole spirit and aim of the doctrine of the text and other Scriptures of like import; lest in avoiding the one limitation placed by Christ upon the great law of reciprocal conduct we destroy it altogether.

I may say there can be no limitation to the law of never rendering "evil for evil" "unto any man" or of always doing "good" "to all men." Evil is never justifiable, and good may never be omitted under the Christian law. The limitation, therefore, that Christ placed upon our nonresistance must be within the law of non-retaliation and constant good, and if so what must be the rule of the limitation? Plainly, to me, it is the rule of love. There is no limitation upon this, for we are to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us and maltreat us. Love is an unfailing debt that we constantly owe to all men, and we will find that Christ never failed to exercise this toward all, enemy as well as friend. When, therefore, the rule of love compels us to withhold our holy things and pearls, these we must withhold, but only by the compulsion of the rule of love; that is, when it is for "good" that we thus withhold our kindly offices or attentions. In other words, if one course of action will do our neighbor good love requires that course; if another course will do him good love equally requires the other course. Hence Christ condemned scathingly the hypocrites of his day, but in love; and we are to "rebuke" as well as to be gentle and kind. When indulging a brother who is doggish or swinish makes him more doggish or swinish we are required by the Christian law of love to deny him and even oppose him.

The law of love, then, is the limitation to all things as well as the compelling power of all kindly conduct. It is our duty to love all men at all times and to interpret all brotherly duty in the light of this great lumi-

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nary of the ethical world. It may be a sun to decompose and destroy that which is morally loathsome or a power to give strength to that which has moral life, fruitage, beauty, and possibility. For one who is not extremely degraded doing kindness for injury, giving prayer for maltreatment, and the like, will work wonders in moral therapeutics, and it should be an ingredient in all ethical prescription and practice.

But some one will say: "How shall we apply this law of love to international relations, to the ethical relations of nations, or the brotherly relations of mankind? And is war ever justifiable under the law of love?" I think it is, else the wars of the Bible must have been contrary to the divine love, but God sometimes commanded war. There are conditions of life when the principles of humanity alone will compel war. Such war can be in love and be compelled by love. Was not our own war with Spain of such a character?

But if we are to inculcate and observe a true Christian ethics we are not to allow ourselves to mistake the true mainspring of all allowable warfare. And we may rightly pray that the day may come when the world will be so Christianized as to render all warfare for "good" an anachronism, and all other warfare, of course, an impossibility.

III. The Effects of Observing the Law of Hetero-Moral-Cures. 1. Note the effects upon those who practice the treatment. Practitioners of suggestive therapeutics, so much in vogue at the present time, declare that the practitioner receives physical, mental, and moral benefit from the treatment he gives to others. Likewise, it may be said that he who practices the Christian spirit toward others cultivates and ennobles his own life more and more. On the other hand, there is nothing more self-degrading than the spirit that is contrary to love. "Envy shoots at another and wounds itself." Nothing truer was ever said, and he who cherishes enmity, or any other non-Christian temper,

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throws a boomerang that returns upon himself. We grow into the image of the spirit we cultivate. He who hates becomes hateful; he who loves becomes changed from glory to glory into the divine likeness.

2. It is the surest way to elevate and ennable others.

(1) It is the surest way to conquer an enemy. "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." This is the triumph of moral goodness in both the practitioner and the patient. There is in every man some element of goodness, and few are those who do not respond to goodness. I once saw a dog conquer another canine of a belligerent type by simple nonresistance. It will disarm many a foe and turn an enemy into a friend, winning him by that which he must feel to be above him.

(2) It is the surest way to redeem a life. How many a lost soul has been wooed back to hope and goodness by the love and kindness, sympathy and evangelical fervor of an earnest Christian! It is the keynote of the message of salvation to a lost world; and while some may abuse the spirit of love in an Antinomian disregard of the Christian ethical standards, millions have been spurred into new moral life by the tender words of hope, mercy, and forgiveness proclaimed by the gospel and carried in the hearts and words of Christian disciples. As we are forgiven, so we forgive; and as the divine gentleness makes us great, so human gentleness, in coöperation with the divine, makes our fellows great.

3. Here is the solution of all international imbroglios and the promise of the federation of the world. Do we long for the time when the prophecies of Isaiah as to war will be fulfilled? Do we long for the poetic promise of the poet of peace when the "war-drum" shall throb "no longer, and the battle-flags be furled in the parliament of man, the federation of the world"? Do we sigh for the golden reign of the millennium on the

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earth? Do we pray fervently, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? Such conditions and such times will be realized when we learn fully and practice earnestly the message of my sermon, when no man will render to any evil for evil, but ever (always) follow that which is good toward all.

4. The spirit of the text is the creative and constructive spirit. Hate destroys. Love builds. Life will be richer when we hate less and love more. It will also be easier. The curse of the world's work is sin. Does a fire burn and destroy? Are communities sometimes driven in loss and despair before its merciless ravages? Hate is a fire that burns and destroys. It is war, pestilence, darkness. Love is a fire that warms, cheers, and strengthens. It is the dynamic strength of a constructive life and civilization. Hate is a cyclone with devastation in its wake. Love is the morning star, giving promise of a brightening day.

May the spirit of the Christ-love be breathed upon a sinning and foolish world, teaching us the laws of happy and helpful life, when the higher race-suicide, the destruction of our own and the world's interests, will be stayed by the banishment of all un-Christian temper from the bosom of mankind! "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

LESSON FOR AUGUST 15

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY— EPHESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified."
—Acts 19. 17.

BY CHARLES H. FAHS, B.D.

MISSIONARY EDITOR OF THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS OF THE
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY

THE creation narrative of the Hebrews that we have as part of the book of Genesis is by far the most beautiful and inspiring of all creation stories. In this account we are told that the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them to that first lone man, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.

So it was in the garden that the Lord God planted "eastward, in Eden," and so it has been among all the sons of Adam from that day to this. One of the earliest tasks the white or brown or black child seems consciously to set for itself is to name the objects about it. We are puzzled by the child's gurgling efforts, and the child comes after a time, as a matter of imitation, and perhaps of expediency, to adopt the same names its elders use, but the instinct, old as the race, is at work. So, too, when the grown-up child seeks to learn a new language the same process is in part once more repeated. The primary steps consist in learning new names for objects already familiar. When the missionary to some tribe beyond the confines of civilization sets out to learn the tongue of the natives, he necessarily starts by seeking to discover the names of objects ani-

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mate and inanimate, names probably assigned by the long-dead ancestors of these dusky children of the forest or jungle.

Herein, then, is the deep significance of names. They are so fundamentally essential to all our thinking that they serve to recall to our minds sense impressions primarily stimulated by the objects themselves. The names are not only symbols of objects, but tend to act upon us very much as do the objects, already experienced through sense impressions, which the names symbolize. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," but who would be so foolish as to think that he could for us rename the rose?

All that is true of the names of objects is true with added emphasis of the names of persons. Names intrinsically commonplace or suggestive of the trivial become full of meaning and of the highest dignity when carried by persons of noble worth or of sturdy ability. Names sonorous or winningly euphonious confer no distinction on those whose lives carry no meaning. Surnames or Christian names become surcharged in our minds with high qualities we have learned to ascribe to those who have borne these names. Because of this, names which have a sinister import we prefer to have fall into disuse, while names immortalized by worthy deeds we desire to have cherished and held sacred.

If all this be true in the commonplaceness of everyday life, what shall be said of the sacred names that have for us the deepest meaning in religious thought and experience. The thunders of Sinai summoned the children of Israel to revere the name of the Most High, and the evidence seems to be that for many centuries the Hebrews reverentially sought to avoid speaking aloud the name of Jehovah. Even to this day, in translating the Scriptures into languages not yet freighted with their message, no single question is of greater moment than that of the name to be given to God. In China, for instance, after a hundred years of Protestant Christian

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effort, the missionaries are only just now coming to anything like unity of sentiment concerning the Chinese term to be used for God.

In the developing religious life of the Hebrews the Messianic hope repeatedly expressed itself in an effort to find appropriate titles for the deliverer that should come. In one of the very finest of these passages Isaiah breaks forth in rapturous declaration that the Messiah-child's name should be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Later, the angel whispering into the ear of the obedient Mary told her that the name of him that was to be born should be Jesus, the Son of the Most High, the Son of God, and the New Testament thrills with a multitude of other titles given to this Jesus who was to save his people from their sins.

And now we find in an account of Paul's missionary efforts at Ephesus, a great heathen city of Asia Minor, the suggestive declaration that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Yet when we come to examine the story back of this declaration we are somewhat disappointed. One difficulty is that the account has to do with the casting out of an evil spirit; but demoniacal possession in most lands called civilized is either an unknown phenomenon, or else is dealt with as a phase of insanity. Probably to find the counterpart to-day of the unfortunate creatures who came to Paul to be dispossessed of their tormenting evil spirits, we should need to go to regions in Asia or Africa where spirit worship yet holds sway. Here we could find victims who might well wish for a masterful Paul to come to their aid, and here, too, we would find wandering exorcists like the sons of Sceva at Ephesus, who live by pretending to cast out evil spirits through magic words and incantations. These seven sons of the Jewish high priest watched Paul at his work, and forthwith essayed to use Paul's formula. Two of the seven, in the name of the Lord Jesus, ordered the evil spirit to come out

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of a certain man. The spirit made a curt reply, and the demon-possessed man, in a fit of violence, fell upon the blaspheming devil doctors—as they would be called in Africa to-day—and the devil doctors fled naked and wounded. The marvel of it all, and especially the discomfiture of the uncanny wizards, perchance themselves usually objects of fear, made the event talked about all over Ephesus, both among Jews and Greeks, and the name of the Lord Jesus came to be held in great repute.

One would be interested to know just what was the real content of this peculiar esteem. When Paul first arrived in Ephesus he found a little group of believers who had been baptized into John's baptism but who knew nothing of the richer significance of the baptism of Jesus. For three months Paul preached in the Jewish synagogue, and then for two years he reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus, and his message came to have the widest of hearing. Further, he showed such power in dealing with the sick and those demoniacally possessed, that parts of his garments were sought as charms. Now there comes to be small talk and great talk from city's end to city's end about those Jewish exorcists, sons of that high priest, Sceva, who had been put to confusion and totally disgraced when they tried to use Paul's formula over a poor bewitched man. No wonder the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, but of ten parts awe in which it was held, seven parts must have been rank superstition.

In a far worthier way, however, the name of the Lord Jesus came to be magnified in deed and in truth at Ephesus. We are told that the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed. There was a nucleus of real Christians there, and when the elders from Ephesus went over to Miletus a little later to bid a last farewell to Paul as he was taking ship for Jerusalem the little prayer meeting and the affectionate farewells at the leave-taking make for us a picture that never fails to touch the heart.

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Still later it was that Paul wrote his letter to the saints at Ephesus—including doubtless those same men who had gone over to Miletus to see him sail. Just as the matchless oratory of Isaiah's prophecy of the Wonderful Counselor that was to come had been stirred by his contemplation of the weak-kneed, vacillating, irresponsible King Ahaz then in power, so Paul in writing to these Ephesian saints perhaps remembered the gossipy hubbub that was raised about the name of Jesus when the Jewish exorcists were discomfited. Isaiah's superb prophecy concerning the name of the Messiah to come is paralleled by Paul's equally superb passage concerning the Christ that had come. Hear him as in a single marvelous sentence he magnifies the name of his Lord: "For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Such an exaltation of the Christ would never have been put into words for the Ephesian saints had they not been ready for such a spiritual message. Moreover, in the revelation of Saint John the divine, in the messages

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to the seven churches, that at Ephesus is first addressed. Leaving its first love calls for a sharp rebuke, but nevertheless the risen Christ is represented as saying to the Ephesian church, "Thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary."

With us, knowledge of the Christ, likeness to the Christ, and service for the Christ are the elements that go toward magnifying the name of the Lord Jesus in the worthiest way. Wheresoever and whensoever these are not found among men—there and then exists opportunity of the finest type—opportunity to magnify the name of the Lord Jesus in life and service by seeking to stimulate such life and service among others.

I know of a land that is sunk in shame,
Of hearts that faint and tire;
And I know of a name, a name, a name,
Can set this land on fire.
Its sound is a brand, its letters flame,
I know of a name, a name, a name,
Will set this land on fire.

LESSON FOR AUGUST 22

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—THE RIOT IN EPHESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—2 Cor. 12. 9.

BY A. C. McCREA, D.D.

PASTOR FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY

IN Paul's extremity a voice speaks to him, assuring him of the sufficiency of divine grace. He knows the voice, for he seems to have kept on speaking terms with the Lord ever since their first meeting. In text and context Paul declares how all-powerful and all-pervasive is the grace of the Lord Jesus. In the preceding chapter he describes in remarkable detail the trials through which he has safely passed; in this chapter he dwells on the delights and the unspeakable blessings of paradise which he had been permitted to taste, and for both states he assures the Corinthians the grace of the Lord is needed and is sufficient. We are accustomed to seek grace for times of need, often forgetting that it is just as essential in the times of prosperity. Dangers threaten those who live on the hilltops as much as those who dwell in the valleys. Paul is perhaps the very best illustration of what grace can do for men, therefore we shall consider three phases of his life and mark in them the sufficiency of grace.

I. *Grace is sufficient for salvation.* The greatest thing in the life of Paul was his conversion, as it is the greatest thing in the life of any man, and the power which can effect it is the most wonderful power in the world. In the natural life all things tend to decay and death, but in the divine life all things work together for

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good and for preservation. Death worketh in one, life in the other, and grace is the sufficient cause.

It is often lamented that such a calamity as the fall in Eden should have been permitted, but why such lament when grace can overcome all the evils of the fall and restore the fallen? Paul never spent much time in explaining the entrance of evil into the world; he rather urged the immediate application of the antidote. In his mind sin was the opportunity for grace, and where sin abounded grace did much more abound. In this he imitated the Master, who, when he was asked by his disciples as to the cause of blindness of a certain man, whether it was he or his parents who had sinned, refused to discuss the cause but rather dealt with the cure. The blind man's calamity was God's opportunity; so sin now should be made without delay or discussion the occasion for grace. When it is so made grace always proves its power to change the worst of sinners into the best of saints. The testimony of all who have felt the transforming power from Paul down to the present generation is the same: "By the grace of God I am what I am."

II. But Paul also exemplifies in his life that grace is sufficient for those who suffer. His sufferings described in the verses leading up to the text in chapter 11 are perhaps the most numerous and varied of any ever recorded; certainly there is no other such record in the Scriptures. Not long since this passage of Scripture was quoted with thrilling effect by the sainted Bishop Andrews, and the impression made will never be forgotten. Read this catalogue of his sufferings, and remember that the secret of his endurance is found in the text.

The problem of pain and suffering is as old as the race, and perhaps it is no nearer a rational solution to-day than in Paul's day, but certain we are, his panacea is as potent now as when he first prescribed it. But his way of regarding pain and its uses may be of great

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value to us. As sin in his way of thinking is made the occasion for grace, so suffering finds grace its best solvent. He submits to the thorn in the flesh, and while as one has said it was "acute," "incurable," it was not "unendurable," for grace softened its sting. The difficulty with most of us is we are so slow in applying both the solvent for suffering and the antidote for sin. Pain is extensive as well as intensive, all men are subject to it; sorrows are in every heart. Joseph Parker once said, "Preach to broken hearts; the man who does that is always sure of a congregation, for there is at least one in every pew."

Regarding thus the multiplied sufferings of Paul and the universal suffering and pain in the world to-day, and knowing that for him and for all others who seek divine help grace was and is sufficient, we are encouraged to heed the invitation to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For suffering, grace is sufficient.

Suffering may be regarded as a school through which all must pass if they are to come to the highest usefulness. It is a blessing in disguise, nevertheless a blessing. It is to man what mining, milling, and minting are to the golden metal. There is a vast difference between the character of a child and that of a man. The one is pure because never subjected to any contaminating influence; the other is pure because it has been purged with fire. The first may be beautiful, but the second is both useful and beautiful. And before strength is added to beauty, beauty must submit to the fire of affliction and suffering; only thus can the colors be set and the vessel made of real value. It is a trying hour when the children of our hearts are first given to the furnace, but as of old they shall come forth with not so much as the smell of smoke upon their garments, for in the furnace is one like unto the Son of God. Not to avoid the furnace, but how safely and securely to pass through it, should be the lesson taught to every child in

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due season. Not to be ignorant of sin, but to know perfectly and to possess fully the power to overcome it, is the safest thing for everyone, young and old. Not to escape the sorrows and heart aches, but to have grace to bear them, is the true way for the Christian. Men who led in life's warfare and won victories for righteousness and truth have been bold to come forth into the open field and meet the enemy in earnest conflict, trusting in themselves, their cause and their God. Paul's greatest glory was in his willingness to suffer in any way to any degree, even to the giving up of his life, and in this particular could he truly say he knew the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

III. Grace sufficient for service finds also its best illustration in the life of the apostle. "The slave of Jesus Christ" is the term which Paul uses to describe his relation to the Master and his work. Next to the life of Jesus, into three years of which was crowded most of his work, stands the life of Paul as the embodiment of Christian activity. His ideal was to give as much effort as possible to the work and never cease to labor until he should cease to live. Let him that is greatest among you be your minister, was the order from heaven which placed Paul in the leadership of the early church. "Instant" was he "in season, out of season." And, as in sin and suffering he found grace sufficient, so in service. Grace for service may at the first glance seem unnecessary, but is it? A minimum of grace may be adequate for the ordinary service of the present-day Christian, but to do the larger work of the kingdom, and bring about results commensurate with the opportunities afforded and power promised, is not a small or easy task. Men thus laboring are forced to cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Paul's work really began when his conversion was complete, and we naturally associate his activity with the great change. "What wilt thou have me to do?" was the first question that fell from his lips. Grace has

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been known to work a like desire for service in many others since Paul's day. In a certain village a young man having no apparent purpose in life was accustomed to spend most of his time leaning against a fence. Here he could be seen, almost any hour of the day, and nobody expected anything more of him. Returning to that village after ten years' absence, we found him in the same spot, only fence and man were a trifle more weather-beaten and worn. But this same village loafer not long since surprised all who knew him by quitting his post and securing a place to work. When the secret of the change was learned it was found he had been converted in the revival services held in the village, and with his conversion came the desire to do something. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ will banish indolence as it will dispel ignorance and cure sin.

Again, grace not only awakens a desire to do, but it changes, oftentimes, the plans and purposes of one's life. Paul took up after conversion the very work he before had despised and attempted to destroy. Many a man has had the whole course of his life completely changed into new channels by the incoming of the new life, for grace not only makes us want to do but want to do the best. In the service to which grace calls there is great need of continuance. How many by neglect fall away! Witness the many church workers, Sunday school teachers, and leaders in Christian service who have given up all part in what once took their whole thought and time; the company is large, its plight pathetic. But, on the other hand, note the multitude that no man can number in both the church militant and triumphant who are faithful; these by grace remain firm to the end and win the crown of life. The world has its saints as well as heaven, and they are its constant call to the young to continuance in welldoing. Every community possesses those of whom it can be said in some degree as was recently said of Theodore L. Cuyler by one who felt the power of his life, now con-

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tinued long past the fourscore years: "We know of no minister of the gospel who knows more, sees more, or feels more of human progress and of the things of the kingdom of God"; and we add, "and does more" for the same; for there is no name more frequently met with in the religious press of the land than the name of this "grand old man" of the American pulpit, this preacher of righteousness and peace whom the grace of God keeps active even in old age. In the day of Paul the ministers of the gospel never retired from service as long as life lasted, and it frequently happened that after a long life of labor these men gladly met death in such a way as to make it true that in passing they accomplished more for the cause of their Master than they had done in all the years of effort. For service, for the best service and for continued service, grace is sufficient.

The ancients possessed a goddess of beauty whose girdle when given to mortals imparted grace. Many were the devotees of this particular goddess, for most mortals are lacking in grace. Paul associates grace with Christ, and assures all who need it that in him they may find it and for the asking it may be had free and full. The church has been accustomed to designating as the means of grace such features of her life as prayer, praise, and preaching, but these three are essentially one and may be summed up in one word—"communion." Communion with Christ is the channel of grace. To the disciples Jesus gave the parting words of assurance, "I am with you alway." To Paul he gave essentially the same promise, in the words, "My grace is sufficient for thee"—sufficient for salvation, for suffering, for service.

LESSON FOR AUGUST 29

PAUL ON CHRISTIAN LOVE

GOLDEN TEXT: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."—1 Cor. 13. 13.

LOVE'S SUPREME GREATNESS

BY WALLACE B. FLEMING, B.D.

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, MAPLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

"BUT now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (American Revised Version). The chapter which culminates in these splendid words is Saint Paul's eulogy of love. Because of its truth and its beauty it is rightly prized as one of the finest gems of literature. In this eulogy the apostle shows, first, that all else is vain without love. Eloquence, wisdom, faith, charity, sacrifice—these are of great importance: but "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." All else is vain without love. Next, the apostle shows the nature of love as revealed in the varying circumstances of life. The manifestations of love are these: *long-suffering*, "love suffereth long"; *kindness*, "and is kind"; *magnanimity*, "love enviyeth not"; *humility*, "love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"; *politeness*, "doth not behave itself unseemly"; *unselfishness*, "seeketh not its own"; *goodness of temper*, "is not provoked"; *readiness to forgive*, "taketh not account of evil"; *sincerity*, "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth"; *patience*, "bareth all

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things"; *trustfulness*, "believeth all things"; *optimism*, "hopeth all things"; *steadfastness*, "endureth all things." These are manifestations of love that reveal love's nature. The apostle then shows the worth of love because of its permanence. "Love never faileth"; it is eternal; it "abideth."

The condemnation of much that is in the world is not that it is evil, but that it is not worth while. There is much in the world which is important that is not of first importance. Values must be seen in their proper proportions. Low gains are sometimes purchased at very high costs. That was the sin of Esau. He could not appreciate the birthright, and he had a very exaggerated idea of the value of the mess of pottage. The pottage had some value; but getting pottage at such a price would bankrupt any soul. Fleeting gains may be purchased at eternal costs. There is always a danger that the near will shut out of vision that which is a little farther off. Pleasures, riches, honors, positions of power, business success, wisdom—all these have their values, but their values must be rightly rated. High and eternal things must not be sacrificed in our eagerness for earthly bubbles. Even the *good* must not be gotten at the sacrifice of the *best*.

The things of which Saint Paul speaks were highly valued by the church at Corinth. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away"; they shall count for but little in the bright light of the hereafter. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease"; this gift is gone with the time that made it needful. "Whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away"; the partial shall give way to the perfect. As childhood's crude knowledge gave way to the maturer knowledge of manhood, so our manhood's knowledge, which is but the mirrored shadows of truth, will give place to full knowledge when we see face to face. Even knowledge is temporal and passing. A part of love's preëminence is its permanence.

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“Now abideth”: the “now” is not of time, it marks a transition of thought. We are turning to the things that abide. Three stand out before us as eternal. Faith will not vanish into sight. There will be a place for the soul’s glad trust in God through all the ages to come. Faith will abide. And hope will not be wholly lost in realization. There will be room for the unfolding of God’s goodness as long as there are ages to unfold, and hope will ever look forward in glad anticipation. The apostle’s argument is that faith and hope are eternal and very great, but that supreme greatness belongs to love. “Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.”

I. *It is love that is the source of our greatest joys.* Love for relatives, love for friends, love for country, love for God—from such sources our greatest joys come.

I know a man who works with a pick and a shovel. He walks two miles to his work every morning and homeward at evening; it is cheaper than paying carfare. His hours of work are from 7 A. M. till 5.30 P. M., and then he makes extras by mowing lawns before and after working hours. Of what he earns he allows himself only thirty or forty cents per day on which to live. But if you could hear him at some time when he thinks he is alone you might hear him laughing to himself or humming some glad song, for Niccola is happy. You don’t know how happy he is. He has a secret that he doesn’t tell to everybody. He is saving most of the money that he makes, but he isn’t saving it for himself. He knows how to dream, and some of his dreams come true. Over in sunny Italy he has a wife and a child or two. After a while he will have money enough saved to send for them; but he must have a home ready for them first. He has it all pictured out to himself. The vines will climb up the side of the house, and the flowers will bloom in the dooryard, and he will hear his little children laughing; and his wife who is waiting him—how happy she will be in this great land! And some-

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times when the sun is hot, and his eyes are filled with sweat, and he leans on his shovel in weariness, the dream of the little home comes up before him and he hears the laughter of his children. Then he forgets that he is tired, and he gives that little chuckle of a laugh or hums the bright song.

Some people say that Niccola is a fool for working so hard; but he is trying to make his dream come true. Some say that he is stingy because he doesn't spend his money for drink; they don't know what wine of joy he has. After a while he will have enough money to buy the little home; and then it will not be long until he will send the letter with the money to bring the wife and children to America. And he will go down to Ellis Island to meet them. They will come by steerage passage, of course, just as the representatives of many of the first families of our land came. And when he meets them there will be a scene to make the angels laugh. And some people who don't know much will probably say, "Look at those dagos making fools of themselves." But Niccola will not care; he will have his little heaven then that he catches foregleams of now. Niccola knows how to dream; and all his dreams are dreams of love. Do you wonder that he is happy?

Love brings heaven into the dull drudgery of earth. It is the source of our greatest joys. And as love increases, joy increases also. It is written of the land of love where dwells the God of love, "In thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

II. *It is love that is the inspiration of all worthy service for God or man.* You remember that Jesus showed the unworthiness of other motives. We are not to give alms as the hypocrites, in order to have glory of men. We are not to pray as the hypocrites, in order to be seen of men. We are not to fast as the hypocrites, in order to appear to men to fast. These have their reward, but it is a poor little earthly reward: they have no reward

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of your Father which is in heaven. The worth of Lowell's Vision of Sir Launfal is that it sets forth the universal truth that love must inspire every service to make it worthy. You remember that as Sir Launfal rode forth from his castle gate at the beginning of his quest for the Holy Grail, he tossed a coin of gold with scorn to the leper who sat by the roadside to beg. He sought in all lands for the Holy Grail, and returned at last to the gate of his castle an old and disappointed but softened man. Again he hears the leper pleading for alms. He has learned love's lesson. He breaks the ice on the stream near by, and brings water in the wooden bowl. He shares his last crust of bread with the leper. Then, as he muses, the leper glorified appears as Christ, and says:

In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here—this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.

Our Saviour showed by his words concerning the alabaster box of precious ointment, and by his words concerning the offering of the widow in the temple, that sacrifice and service are never rightly measured except by the love which inspires them. Our service for God or our fellows will never come to its best until we can say, "The love of Christ constraineth us."

III. *Then, it is love that glorifies life.* Some of you remember the Civil War. You remember how that, in the hour of the nation's peril, men awoke to the greatness of their love for the old flag, and how that love transformed them into patriots. You have seen some light-hearted young woman who seemed never to have

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had a serious thought about anything in her bright butterfly life. A few years later you have seen the same lady, whose life has now a wondrous depth and tenderness, bending over a cradle to still the cry of a little child; and then you have known the old, old story of a life transformed and glorified by love. Love is the alchemist that transmutes base metals into gold. And if this be true of earthly love, how much more of the heavenly. Let a man think of the greatness of the love that planned the way of salvation, how love gave the Saviour, how love bore the cross, how love forever intercedes at the right hand of God, how the Holy Spirit of love comforts and strengthens and directs the lives of men—let a man think of the greatness of God's love that overshadows him, and yield himself to it, and the process has begun by which he is transformed into the very image of Christ.

Love does all of this and a very great deal more, because it is the Godlikeness within us. "God is love," and "we love, because he first loved us." Ours is but a reflection of the love in heaven. Our little torches only burn because they have been touched by the fire from above. Faith and hope are the upward and the forward reach of the soul, and they are very great; but greater than these is love, for love is the soul's answer to the touch of God.

Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine;
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love me who have died for thee.

Faith and hope are individual exercises; they do not even require a person as the objective; we may exercise them concerning things or events. But greater than these is love, for love means fellowship; and when love finds its noblest exercise it lifts us up into fellowship with God. "God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 5

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY—FAREWELLS

GOLDEN TEXT: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."—Phil. 4. 13.

BY ROBERT E. HARNED, B.D.

ASSISTANT EDITOR, BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
NEW YORK CITY

THESE words are an expression of a very important part of the apostle Paul's philosophy of life. In this brief sentence he proclaims the source of his strength, a consciousness of which enabled him to do the many difficult things that are credited to him in the Scriptures. The study of a certain incident near the end of his third missionary journey is a splendid means of learning what this plank in his life platform meant to him.

The occasion we have in mind would furnish a fit subject for the brush of some great artist. In human interest it compares favorably with many incidents that have been immortalized on canvas. The interest of the event lies not in its being a crisis in the life of some great man or some company of men, nor has it the deeply pathetic interest of such scenes as present themselves at several points in the life of Christ, and which have been fixed in the minds of men by the aid of the artist's imagination. But as the occasion of the farewell of our Lord's first great missionary to a company of devoted Christian followers among whom he had spent three strenuous years it is worthy of representation in accurate colors.

With the aid of your imagination, paint the picture for yourself. Paul, the apostle, hurrying along the

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coast of Asia Minor, passes by Ephesus and touching at Miletus speeds a messenger to the elders of the church in Ephesus bidding them to come to him ere he rushes on toward Jerusalem. They have come, and in the center of a sorrowing group we perceive their venerable teacher listening with loving interest to their sad words of farewell. From time to time in the conversation he reminds them of different phases of his three years' sojourn in their city, and adds to his reminiscences kindly warnings and exhortations. A veil of sorrow is thrown over the company by his prophecy that they shall see his face no more.

This incident may become a source of instruction to us in that it offers a good opportunity to observe one phase of the great apostle's character, namely, his indomitable courage, which is expressed by the record of his previous deeds and of his outlook upon the future. From his farewell words to the Ephesian elders we also may learn these things about himself.

Looking into the record of this farewell address, as contained in the twentieth chapter of the book of Acts, we find that his first words are reminiscent of the three years which he had spent with them in the city of Ephesus. He says, "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews." His experience then had not been one of ease or of unalloyed happiness. There had been tears mingled with the joys of those days. Afflictions had come because of the plottings of the Jews. We know not what all those afflictions were. It may be that he endured the persecution of slanderous tongues, or perhaps his crafty enemies found means of interfering with his efforts to earn a livelihood. Of the fact that he gained his living by his own labors he reminds them, saying, "Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered

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unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." The Bible records of other times in the life of Paul suggest the possibility that the Jews even went so far as to attempt to kill him. But whatever those plottings were we know from his words that there were unhappy trials to endure, and we know that he was equal to the needs of the situation.

But there are other things hard to do besides the enduring of persecutions. One of these things is the important duty of bearing witness to the truth. Sometimes one feels that it would be easier to endure physical hardship for the sake of one's faith than boldly to proclaim that faith in unsympathetic surroundings. Perhaps, after all, it would not be so hard to die for the truth's sake as to live day by day as its champion. This may have been what Paul had in mind when he said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." There were circumstances connected with declaring the counsel of God in the city of Ephesus at that time that called for more courage than is required to stand before the ordinary Christian congregation of to-day and preach. This is the city where the trade of fashioning idols was of so great importance, and the craftsmen employed in that business were so numerous that they were able to stir up a tremendous outbreak, in which the people for about two hours cried out with one voice, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Even these men to whom Paul spoke were themselves in the ranks of paganism only a short time before. They were what are called in these days "first generation Christians." Doubtless most of their relatives and intimate friends still bowed down to idols of Diana. Our modern missionaries realize what courage it requires to proclaim the message of salvation in such a community. To preach Christ among a people whose religious ideas are rooted in centuries of heathen ancestry is quite a different thing from preaching to an American congregation.

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with many generations of Christian ancestry behind them. And yet Paul was able to remind the men of Ephesus that even under such circumstances he had not "shunned to declare all the counsel of God."

The unconquerable courage of this man is shown again in this farewell incident when he reveals to his friends his feelings with regard to what he knows to lie before him in the near future. Listen to his own words: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." This seems like anything but a pleasant outlook. The apostle surely would be excused for hesitating about going on to Jerusalem with such expectations concerning his reception there. But does he hesitate? The author of the book of Acts says that Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, "for he hasted, if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." More than this, he himself said to the elders from Ephesus, immediately after referring to the things that might befall him, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself."

Such is the threefold evidence of Paul's courage as drawn from his own parting words to his friends in the seaport town of Miletus. The explanation of the courage which he displayed in these three particulars and in manifold other ways throughout his Christian career is found in the declaration which is the text of this discourse: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is a statement taken from a letter written by the apostle some time later in his career, but it might have stood as well for a closing word at his farewell meeting with the leaders of the Christian forces in Ephesus.

As a reasonable basis for confidence what can surpass the knowledge that one has at his disposal a source

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of irresistible power? It is easy to understand the courageous attitude of a man toward difficult tasks if we know that he can summon to his aid a power that is entirely capable of bringing these things to pass. A writer in one of our well-known magazines, in discussing the comparative merits of the ox and the horse as drawers of the plow, thus describes the manner of the ox: "He simply journeys and the load goes along. He does not exert himself at a patch of woven soil and then hurry up when he has passed it. The chain becomes stiffer and the yoke sits solider to his neck and that is all; there is no sign of effort." A plowman depending upon such a drawing power might be excused for showing confidence as to the results.

What is true in the realm of physical tasks is also true in the realm of such duties as Paul had to perform. What, for instance, is persecution, although of the bitterest sort, to one who is strengthened by such a power as supported Paul? Let us grant that naturally this man was no less sensitive to the hostile attitude of his persecutors than are other men. Nevertheless, he could cry out with the psalmist, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear," for he had the same assurance as the man who first sang that song and who also said, "The Lord is the strength of my life." If the task were "to declare all the counsel of God" he did not shun it, for his strength was from Christ who proclaimed the truth when unbelieving men smote him upon the mouth calling him a blasphemer. Should the disciple of such a master shrink from following in the footsteps of his Lord, when that guide endows him with his own power?

Paul stands upon the strand at Miletus and peers out upon the sea as though he would erase the distance that separates him from Jerusalem, and would see with the physical eye the things that await him there. Is it possible that we could persuade him to give up

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the struggle and return with his loving friends to Ephesus? Were we to attempt it he would doubtless turn to us and say, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." This he would say because his strength was the only kind that welcomes "bonds and afflictions," the strength which is from Christ Jesus.

The words of Paul which are made the text of this discourse may become the sincere utterance of any disciple who will take them for his own. From Paul to the present time, men of all stations, of all tongues, of all races, have endured persecution without flinching, have not shunned to proclaim the truth in hostile surroundings, and have gone forth certain that bonds and afflictions awaited them, and have done all through Christ who strengthened them. The testimony of Paul in this regard and the testimony of those others, who in later ages have proven that men can do all things through Christ, should be an encouragement to us who require strength for tasks similar to theirs. We have persecutions to endure; we are given the honorable responsibility of declaring to men "the counsel of God"; we are called upon to go forth, not knowing what afflictions await us. For these things we need strength, and that strength Christ will give. With Paul we may proudly boast: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 12

CLOSE OF PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

GOLDEN TEXT: "The will of the Lord be done."—Acts 21. 14.

BY JAMES W. EASLEY, D.D.

PRESIDENT UNION COLLEGE, BARBOURVILLE, KENTUCKY

We will accept these words as Paul's. The words used by him in their last analysis come to this. We can thus better elucidate the thought. It matters materially who speaks when unusual thoughts are expressed. Behind every utterance is a life, a character. It is this that gives value to the expression before us. Closing a period of unprecedented toil and suffering, facing further difficulties and unquestionably further suffering, Paul calmly acquiesces in the decision of his friend, "The will of the Lord be done." Paul from early life had sought to unfold the mysteries of the kingdom of God. A new discovery was made on the Damascus way. But it was the same God to whose greatness he was coming. In that moment of vision and voice he asked, "What wilt thou have me to do, Lord?"

What are the probabilities of being misguided? What is there of certainty to support men when they say, "The will of the Lord be done," and immediately, without consulting flesh and blood, set themselves to do it? Let us look briefly at some of the great truths that assure us that men may safely do this.

I. *The supreme intelligence of God gives greatest assurance.* We mean by that, the perfect knowledge and wisdom of God. The psalmist intended to clearly carry this idea when he said, "Be still, and know that I am God." Nothing can go wrong; all will go right be-

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cause "I am God." True it may be that we must allow a thousand or two of years to understand the truth in its broad application, but time will make it plain. When the Free Church of Scotland was organized and those mighty men, clear-visioned and unequivocal in position and speech, left this church and preached in barns and the open to their small flocks, they evidently were lacking in worldly wisdom. But to-day as then, their determination gives us a virile church, undergirded by mightiest intelligence and throbbing with mighty love. Divine intelligence adjusts things, putting part to part till completeness is attained. This is true of atoms till equally true of the world. How wonderful and beautiful is this world! How wondrously adapted to man as a home for the development of self! How for his use! Just the kind of world he needs to exert his energies upon. Everything so diversified; every-thing so necessary for what man thinks, purposes, and does. It did not happen to be so. It is so because highest intelligence conceived it, and set agencies to work to make it so. Man is a part—small according to spacial calculation, for "when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" But he is related to the whole, and potentially *a man* is greater than all besides: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands"; yet full of fears that create distrust, till he rests himself upon the truth and promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye." Childhood rests in plans and protection of parents; accepts their plans, seeks this protection because they believe the parents know and are wise in adjustments. Broader and diversified intelligence is the inspiration and basis of constitution and creeds, hence men select statesmen and theologians to guide in church and state. Intelligence unselfishly applied to affairs of men is their guarantee of highest

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good. Richard Cobden and John Bright brought their fertile minds to enlighten a Parliament and make an unwilling body grant concessions which meant bread to starving masses. Wilberforce brought his intellectual blade of celestial temper to bear upon a government that trafficked in the bodies and souls of men till demoniacal fetters were taken from human lives. If in imperfect men we find such grace; if human reason thus can be made to conceive the highest interests of men; if men can come to believe that always and everywhere truth has champions, can they fail to see these are but broken lights of God?

II. *The power for effecting whatever is God's will.* That there is this power is a well-founded belief. This inheres in the Godhead. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" History has some interesting contributions to this belief. God willed that Israel should come out of Egyptian bondage. The king denied the right and privilege to their masterful leader. Ten plagues of increasing magnitude were sent. The flower of the Egyptian army was engulfed in the sea. But Israel, free and triumphant, sang a pæan upon the bank toward the sunrise. This power is the theme of that Christian epic, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. It is the theme of the gospels and epistles because these were written to inspire hope and faith in the forlorn life of a struggling world. "Tis better to believe, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we think or ask," than to falter in the path of duty and lose a single moment. When John G. Fee was impressed with his obligation to enter upon a lifework fraught with danger, owing to the spirit of opposition which caused men to be imprisoned and beaten unlawfully upon the highways, he went to the wood back of Cincinnati and, Jacob-like, wrestled with God. He contracted with God that he would do his will, with the

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full understanding that he was to have protection from violence and from the spirit of animosity which might be engendered by strife or persecution. Many times in imminent danger of death but always reminding God of his contract, facing fierce men in high positions with unfaltering courage, he was true to his mission and died only after accomplishing a great work. His father disinherited him and divided his fortune between the remaining children. John G. took the one dollar left him by his father and planted a rose upon that father's grave, which tradition says is the only attention the grave ever received from the family. Men should idealize power when it is devoted to high purposes. Men have clung to old England, refusing citizenship under another flag, because that government, mistress of the seas so long, could reach with an arm of power to any part of the world to give protection to any of her subjects. But Christians, a thousand years before England breathed national life, were saying most gladsomely, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

III. God's love adjusts that will to men's lives. Idealism in human relations can never be approached with nearness without kindly regard and sympathetic attitude in all the relations the individual sustains to individuals. The same is true of the spiritual life. We mean the life of the individual, lived in the consciousness that God is its mightiest and most pleasing environment, that there is concord between the soul and God. This is because man believes that the good God feels kindly toward men and holds a most sympathetic relation to them. It was to establish this that the Son of God came into the world. For this, the Bible that we love and study was given and preserved. Since he came, and from these Bible studies in the Sabbath schools and their homes, men know fully his will and that they are related to it by purest, tenderest

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love. All unconscious of thought of hardness, even childhood hears the Teacher of men say, "Come unto me, and take my yoke upon you; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." No slavery, but a freedom as high as the vaulting of the blue sky and as broad as boundless space.

The apostle brings the fruitage of a great life to us in "The will of the Lord be done." Read this matchless catalogue: "In stripes above measure; in prisons more frequent; in deaths oft; of the Jews received I forty stripes save one; thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep; in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness." But after all he makes men glad, and sends a thrill through us greater than that of victory of arms, as he stands above this wreckage and says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Love adjusting the will to us and us to the will, heaven is closer to earth than we think when all the wires are brought to a strand and the strands turned into a cable. So we may know truly,

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven;
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

IV *The pledge of fealty the duty of common life.*
It was easier for Stanley to enter the wilds of Africa because Livingstone had gone before, following as best he could the path of Livingstone. The one was helped because the other had put no difficulties in the way—rather, by his tenderness and love, had removed many hindrances. Really Livingstone became the savior of

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Stanley. Two persons make easy the duty of men to recognize and accept their places in the kingdom of grace; show us our responsibility to the needs of men who pass over common, everyday paths of life, the hard paths where men faint and perish, the slippery paths where men are taken by surprise. Christ bore the common burdens of life; he tested their weight and looked upon both man and burden, both a fixity, neither could cease to be. He could not change the burden, but he could the man. He said, "Learn of me; my burden is light." He has made it easier for every man to pass through the world; he has made glorious the privilege of passing through. The other person, apprehended by the first person, engaged by a high pledge to be true to Christ, felt that something yet remained behind that he could do to make perfect the sacrifices of the first. He wrought, not in the same tenderness as the Master, but successfully, till, like a beautiful sunset, his life went down, and we find ourselves gazing and wishing it had not gone, for we realize the world needs men who in sincerity and in truth can say with him, "I am ready not to be bound only, but to die, if God's will be done." But the reverie is broken, as in a calm a voice comes back to us saying, "Follow me, as I followed Christ."

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 19

THE GROWTH OF THE WORD

GOLDEN TEXT: "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."—Acts 19. 20.

BY ALVAN C. WILLEY, PH.D.

PERRY, NEW YORK

THE old-fashioned itinerant Saint Paul enjoyed a pastorate of two years at Ephesus. The text, words of a kindly-disposed brother minister, is a summary of his work in that parish. Paul had brought to that city the mightiest thing in the universe. It was within him—in his heart, life, and mouth—the word of God. He loved that. He treasured it. He lived it. Consequently he preached it with power. So mightily it grew and prevailed.

1. It grew mightily and prevailed in the hearts and thoughts and habits of the converts. It exerted a marvelous and continually augmenting influence over the opinions, affections, practices and conversation of the disciples, and, ultimately, over the character of the city itself and over its language and literature. The word of God was the power of God unto their salvation and beatification. There were many "new creatures" in Ephesus developing into a beauty as glorious as that of heaven—new in Christ Jesus. Mightily grew the word and kept growing, insomuch that Ephesian Christianity became famous, and the church of that city a power in Christendom. So mightily grew the word that in time the worship of Diana, or Artemis, was abandoned and her ancient idol destroyed. Her temple lay for centuries in ruins, while its materials were being utilized in the erection of magnificent cathedrals to crown the hills of that and other cities, and point the way to God. Now the very site of the heathen temple, colossal as it was, cannot be identified. Old things passed away and lo! all things became new.

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2. What it did in Ephesus, the word of God will do in any place; what it accomplished in and for any devotee of Artemis, any practicer or victim of magic, it can accomplish in and for any other human being. Why do I believe this?

(1) Ephesus was perhaps the most difficult field in the known world. Superstition, self-interest and local pride combined to make it so. It was the world's capital of a heathen goddess, the center and heart of all her dominion. The Ephesian pagans had venerated for many centuries a block of ordinary wood—probably beech, elm, or cedar. They declared that it had fallen from the skies, and called it by the Greek name Artemis; we say "Diana." The shrine of this object was known as one of the "seven wonders of the world." Burned during the birthnight of Alexander the Great, this temple of Artemis was, during his reign, restored to even greater magnificence. It was the most stupendous monument of superstition the world ever saw. And it was this stupendous monument of idolatry and sorcery that the word of God had to combat; had to do its work in the midst of a population more thoroughly imbued with the folly and stubborn selfishness and deceit and credulity of paganism and magic than anywhere else.

But when the word of God reached their ears and hearts many of these same people burned their books of magic; and, though there ensued a great uproar, this was the beginning of the blessed change which came to that city and its inhabitants. Verily the work done in this center and soul of heathenism and magic can be done anywhere. No honest reverent man need hesitate to take up the fight, for the mightiest thing in the universe is still almighty even when associated with the weakest and most insignificant of men. Any city can be "turned upside down" by the word of God in the hands of earnest, faithful men. This is not a matter of guess or of fond credulity. Contrast any city even nominally Christian with any

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other city admittedly heathen; for instance, New York and Constantinople, or London and Pekin. We shall not have many years to study the contrast, so mightily grows the word. Think of cannibal Fiji and then of to-day's Fiji, more thoroughly Christian than America. Consider Honolulu and Uganda and Madagascar's capital as you find them to-day and the same localities in the year 1825, or even 1875. There is nothing clearer or more engaging and enlightening than the study of "The Divine Origin of Christianity Indicated by its Historical Effects." That is a work constantly increasing in volume and probative value. And no wonder the word grows and prevails. How aptly it cites instances to save us from despair as to self and society! The Ephesian revival, for example, to show how the whole order of worship and law and customs in a community may be changed. Or the word tells about Paul, at the other extreme, stern and implacable moralist, nevertheless obtaining mercy in spite of the hell-forces against him; or else about the thief on the cross, simply through humble confession, assured of a place in paradise, though then at the gates of hell and the grave instead.

There is hope for us—hope and opportunity. Low as we may have groveled, we may yet have clean, true hearts like God's. Hard and merciless though we may have proved ourselves, we may be softened and sweetened and obtain mercy. Whatever our career and shame, paradise may finally open unto us. The word of God and its mighty victories hearten us every day. Many a "chief of sinners" is in glory now. The word has not lost its pristine efficacy for the rest. By grace are ye saved through faith.

(2) What the word did in Ephesus it can do in any place and any heart because it is the mightiest instrumentality of the mightiest Being. I would remind you of the original Fiat Lux and the resultant glory that bathed this globe in its wondrous and potent halo,

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and of the other fiats which fixed the bounds of sky, sea, and land, and caused the earth to bring forth grass, herbs, and trees, and sun, moon, and stars to shine forth clear in the heavens, and water, land and air to teem with moving creatures. The word did it—the word of God. “God said”—that was all. “God said,” and, in consequence, all these things became and persisted in being and in their appointed activities. So much for the material genesis set forth in the gospel according to the Pentateuch. But in the passing of the centuries there came the time, even as Adam’s fall had proved the need, for the greater genesis, a regenesis, a spiritual genesis as set forth in the gospel according to Jesus. It had been a series of stupendous miracles to speak order, beauty, life into being in a world characterized, permeated, environed by chaos and death. But the Supreme One did a mightier and more beneficent thing when by his word a befouled, perverted, deranged, depraved human nature was transformed to a condition in harmony with the divine order and the glory of the highest heavens. O that we had stood by to hear the majestic utterance, “Let there be light,” and to behold its awe-inspiring effect! But we possess a greater privilege in listening even to the still, small voice, “Thy sins are forgiven,” and in feeling in ourselves and observing in others the sublime and gladsome effect.

Ah, mightily grew the word and prevailed in the days of Paul, but mightier far is that word to-day. It grew, and kept growing, and grows now and forevermore. Thousands then, but millions now, believe it and shape their lives by the example of its Author. It is mighty now in the opinions, habits, lives and speech of millions upon millions. Myriads of these are yonder living like archangels, and the rest are preparing for as grand a destiny as that of any who have already crossed the flood.

3. So mightily grew the word and prevailed. How?

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Through sacrifice. The people voluntarily destroyed the word of the devil and substituted God's word. That was and is the way. "Many came and confessed." A sacrifice of pride! True sacrifice involves confession. A manufacturer of braid comes under the mighty influence of the gospel and is changed. At once the braid-measuring drums are enlarged. What his lips do I know not, but his actions speak loud. They tell the story. The word prevails with him by sacrifice. A shopkeeper hears a pointed sermon. She goes home and burns her peck measure. That is her confession and sacrifice, and the word prevails thereby.

The actions of these Ephesians speak louder than their words, definite as their language was. They brought their books of magic and piled them up and burned them before everybody—a confession and sacrifice in one act. But what a costly bonfire! Not only the associations and friendships of a lifetime gone to pieces, and the smooth, comfortable privilege of walking with the many, of living like other folks, and the opportunity of getting a living without much anxiety or toil—all vanished forever, but even their entire source of revenue gone up in smoke! They counted the price of the books, and it was equivalent in purchasing power to from fifty to one hundred thousand dollars in these days. All converted into an ashpile! This ancient race of "bookmakers" were not anarchists. They respected the law and gave up their low trade. Talk about Lent and its fantastic abstinence! Here was self-denial indeed! The stomach was like to learn of it not by the occasional and really pleasurable substitution of a hygienic diet for sweetmeats and other fomenting, soddening fare, but rather by a tightening of the belt. They cast all their living into that fire, and, as Dr. Taylor puts it, "they did not wait to see whether God would open up some honest way of living to them. And they did not try to sell to others that which they felt it was wrong for them to keep." They

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could now labor for Christ untrammelled by worldliness or hypocrisy. The word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. What a day! Has your soul ever had one like it? Has your church? or your town? A day of giving up for Jesus' sake, of idol-burning and of purifying hearts and lives and business and homes! Under Savonarola, Florence had a day like it. The children scurried hither and thither. They collected all the things that savored of idolatry and sin. They piled them high up in a public square, and set them afire, and they were consumed. To the flames with your idols, ye mortals!

The sacrifice must be thorough and would include even things precious and pure, if they stood in God's way. The Russo-Japanese war was raging. A woman at Takasaki, Japan, on learning that her only son had been exempted from service on the ground that she was dependent upon his earnings, immediately wrote a letter stating that she would kill herself that the son might be free to fight for his fatherland. She plunged a dagger into her heart, and, dying, handed the weapon to her son, making signs that she expected him to use it against the enemy.

It was the wrong thing to do, but perhaps the best a poor heathen knew. Nevertheless, the dearest affections of earth must not be allowed to blind us so that we cannot see God with the eyes of our first and supreme love and faith; the dearest object in the world must not come between us and him; the dearest ties of nature and affection must not prevent his unhampered use of our powers. If anybody or anything interfere, the hindrance must be removed at any cost. It usurps his place. The dagger of sacrifice must be plunged into its heart. We must be free to fight for our heavenly fatherland. Without hesitation, reservation or evasion we must surrender everything to God. So mightily grew, so mightily grows, and so mightily will forever grow the word of God and prevail.

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 26

PLEASING ONE'S NEIGHBOR

GOLDEN TEXT: "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."—Rom. 15. 2.

BY FRANK P. PARKIN, D.D.

PASTOR MADISON STREET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
CHESTER, PENNSYLVANIA

THE Revised Version renders this passage, "Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying." The evidences in support of the real inspiration of the Holy Scriptures are neither few nor trivial. They have been proclaimed by the scholars of the church universal so often, and in such convincing form, that despite all the attempts of unbelief to destroy their arguments, and to weaken the popular faith in the authenticity and inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments, this sacred book still maintains its proud title of being the "impregnable rock of Holy Scripture."

One of the many incidental evidences of its divine origin lies in its adaptation to all peoples and to all ages. This truth is of general application to every portion of the Bible, but the Epistle to the Romans in a peculiar sense confirms and illustrates this general truth. A returned missionary recently declared that after reading the first chapter of Romans to a heathen congregation, they were so impressed with its application to themselves that they promptly questioned the missionary's statement that Paul wrote it about eighteen centuries ago. Gathering around him, they said, "You wrote that chapter for us." The Rev. Dr. Dean, for many years a missionary in China, has borne similar testimony of a most striking character. He had been conversing with an intelligent Chinaman

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concerning our sacred books, assuring him that they are very old, and gave him a specimen. Soon after the man came to Dr. Dean, and with a mingled look of triumph and accusation exclaimed, "You told me your book was very ancient; but that chapter," pointing to Romans 1, "you have written yourself since you came here and learned all about Chinamen."

Notwithstanding the wide interval of time, and the ever-changing conditions of modern life, there is no conceivable condition of society, in a probationary state of existence, to which the teachings of these inspired pages will not have a direct or indirect application. This is true not only of the pressing problems of marriage and divorce, amusements, labor and capital, but it is likewise true of the irrepressible question of the temperance movement which has assumed world-wide dimensions. The strongest arguments drawn from the Bible in favor of some specific reform are seldom those which are based on isolated Scripture texts, but rather they are those which embody some great, ever-living principle of action that runs through the entire warp and woof of the Scriptures. One vital comprehensive principle for life's guidance is worth a hundred fragmentary rules.

A careful study of the two epistles—that to the Romans and the First Epistle to the Corinthians—will reveal the method of the apostolic teaching.

The controversy about the eating of meats once offered to idols may seem possibly very childish to us, but to the early Christian it was anything but puerile—it was a most serious problem. It would have wrecked the infant church had there not been the right kind of leadership applied at the opportune moment. Everyone intrusted with the education of children—whether public school or Sunday school teachers, parents or pastors—is under imperative obligation to study the Pauline methods of handling the controversies of the apostolic age, for they will be

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found to contain the germinal ideas and the fundamental methods that must be applied to the problems of this twentieth century as well. The apostle, with a skill, a wisdom, and a firm grasp of great underlying principles that compel our warmest admiration, again and again emerges from the discussion of these vexing little questions, and casting them aside takes his stand firmly on some great rock principle. Questions of casuistry had little or no attraction for Paul. The law of love, the principle of complete consecration to the mind and will of his divine Lord and Redeemer, was the uppermost thought with him, and this was the controlling motive in all his conclusions. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: Whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

The apostle never let go his grasp of that pre-eminently Christ-like idea that we were brought into this world not merely to save ourselves, but that we also must help, encourage, and strengthen our fellow-creatures. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification." That apostolic command is based upon Christianity's fundamental law—that of universal love for mankind. Who is my neighbor? Not only he who dwells next to me. Not only he who is a citizen of the same town, state or country; but my neighbor to-day is my fellow-man, wherever he may chance to reside. We dare not adopt the selfish policy of considering solely our own pleasures or appetites, and treat with contempt or disdain all who do not move on our own plane of ethics. Such a course is inconsistent with Christ's teachings. We owe something to the weak. We must consider the weak conscience.

The late Joseph Parker was one of the most eccentric but also most brilliant men of the English pulpit.

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He had the ability, in his scriptural exegesis, to bring into startling relief certain truths which needed to be emphasized. For example, what could surpass his comments on the passage in First Corinthians referring to the weak conscience? Said he: "After all we must consider the weak conscience. Weakness governs the world; it is always the minority that rules, although if you were to say so in a public meeting you would be hooted from the platform. But it is always the minority that rules. It is weakness that stops the house, it is the baby that keeps the family at home; it is the lame limb that detains all the sound faculties and says, Stop! What! Am I to stop because I have one lame limb? I am sound in all my other limbs, and sound in all my mental faculties, and am I to be humbled in this way? Yes, you are, and you cannot get out of it. So the apostle says, Here is a lame man in the church, and the church must wait for him; and the church says, This is the singular pass we have come to, all waiting for one lame man. The apostle says that is the very idea of the church. The whole universe may be waiting for one little lame world called the earth; nobody can tell how fast the universe might get on but for this cripple called the earth."

A genuine Christian love will always seek to help the weak, the halting, the man who is a victim of appetite or passion. He will even seek to "please his neighbor for that which is good unto edifying."

Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a heaven in hell's despair.

The doctrine of total abstinence from all intoxicating liquors lies at the foundation of all successful and abiding temperance reforms. No legislation which ignores the individual duty as to the sale or use of liquor has in it any promise of ultimate success. All legis-

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lation must be reinforced by the education of the individual. Strong and apparently unanswerable arguments, based solely upon the injurious effects of intoxicants upon the mind and body, can readily be offered in these days of advanced scientific temperance instruction. These reasons are not to be brushed aside with a sneer by those who for selfish or purely financial reasons seek to belittle the doctrine of total abstinence or its natural and logical attendant—prohibition. But, making all due allowance for the strength of these arguments, they need to be reinforced by that infinitely higher and more Christlike reason of self-denial, if needs be, for the good, for the edifying of others. Many a man might sincerely plead: "I could take this wine or this beer or stronger liquors, and suffer no harm to myself. I should know just where to stop. But were I to do so, some poor, weak, tempted soul, who has been struggling for years to overcome an appetite for drink, influenced by my example, might go down to eternal ruin. Therefore, I will refrain. I will deny myself for my brother's good. I will seek to please my neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying." That argument is absolutely irresistible. It is based upon the inestimable and indestructible law of love, of self-sacrifice. It rises above all laws, selfish or man-made laws. Its roots are in the very nature of Christ's own infinite love and sacrifice for poor, weak, tempted, sinful humanity.

This duty of pleasing others, founded as it is solely in the law of Christian love, is limited by what tends to our neighbor's edification. It gives no warrant to the wrong use of flattery, or to a timid yielding to men's mere whims or senseless prejudices. We are not to seek to attain popularity by any of the artful methods of the time-server or the sycophant. We are not to be man-pleasers by any subservience to the mere weakness or folly of others. The Christian's duty is based upon the broad, underlying, never-to-be-forgotten law

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of love toward our fellow man and a sincere purpose to help him. The art of affording real genuine pleasure to our fellows certainly is not condemned, but rather commended in these words of the apostle Paul. Dr. Kane, one of the pioneers in Arctic exploration, declared that he had tested by experience, while wintering in the far North, that there was no nautical skill so important at certain times as one man among the crew who could play the fiddle. The gloom of the long Arctic night made it indispensable that the men should be kept in a cheerful frame of mind. Lieutenant Peary, our intrepid American explorer, has recognized the same fact in his more recent expedition to the North. The underlying motive in each case was that of the real upbuilding and uplifting of the men. When Handel's oratorio of the Messiah had won the admiration of many of the world's great rulers and leaders, Lord Kinnoul, we are told, took occasion to pay the musical genius some compliments on the wonderful "entertainment" which he lately had given the town. "My Lord," said Handel, "I should be sorry if I only entertained them. I wish to make them better." That reply revealed Handel's noble spirit, which made his entire lifework such a blessing to the human race.

This work of edification confronts each generation. Characters are to be built. The lives of children and youth are to be fashioned according to the plans laid down in the Great Architect's Book. Many have begun to build on insecure foundations, while still others are already human wrecks, social derelicts on life's sea. In the temperance cause all motives that shall prove enduring and lead to success, in the last analysis, we shall find, must conform to the teachings of Saint Paul's inspired words: "Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. For Christ also pleased not Himself. . . Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus."

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 3

PAUL A PRISONER—THE ARREST

GOLDEN TEXT: "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—2 Tim. 2. 3.

BY WILLIAM F. SWITZER, A.M.

PASTOR FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, HAMMOND, INDIANA

THE soldier of the nation and the soldier of the kingdom have many things in common. The life of the one mirrors that of the other. Life is so built as to require the martial spirit everywhere. Even the Master is named the Captain of Salvation, and his followers are asked to put on the whole armor of God and withstand in the evil day.

The soldier has been the foundation-builder, propagator, and defender of nations. The trying tasks have fallen to his lot. Some think of him as one set off with tinsel and epaulet and glittering armor, but he has tasted more misery and endured more hardship than any of his fellow-workers. Paul saw the heroism exemplified and counsels God's men to match it. Note the striking parallels of the soldier and the saint.

1. *The voluntary enlistment is a consecration of life itself.* The soldier who freely enlisted had already fought and won a battle within himself. The pleasures of home and gain and ease were put aside. His break with sweet fellowship cost a bitter sigh. Visions of wealth were dismissed. Uncertainty of life was in the new career. Nothing less than his nation's dire need or endangered honor could have moved him. He put his name on the muster roll, abandoned things supremely dear, and consecrated his life to the God of war.

It is not otherwise with the recruit to the cross and service of Christ. Enlistment in the kingdom of truth searches and tries the bravest heart. Getting grafted into a new vine calls for experience with the sharp-

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edged knife. If a man despise not the ease-loving life he cannot be a disciple. Bunyan's Pilgrim realized it all in contemplating flight from the City of Destruction, when putting his fingers in his ears he ran, crying, "Life! Life!" To leave all to follow Christ is necessary to good soldiery. To feel keenly and strongly now is inoculation against future home-sickness. To make a clean work of consecration is to become disentangled from the affairs of this life so as to please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. To bear hardness in full consecration means service with hardiness in the exhausting campaign. The soldier's tearful good-by is equaled by the saint's "We have left all to follow thee."

2. *The good soldier submits to the hardship of discipline.* Discipline and delight are not companions. They are scarcely on speaking terms. The first is bought with sweat and tears. Drill is exhausting and its benefits beyond present appreciation. Developing endurance often looks like useless waste of strength. Marking time is devoid of inspiration. Marching up hill and down again is a spiritless task. Camp restrictions destroy liberty, and the punctilious officer looms into a tyrant. But submission to all this is the way to power.

How little we realize what buffeting it takes to keep our bodies under or how long our tongues must be kept bridled before they will be thoroughly obedient to the bit. We must bid good-by to the pampered life or be incapable of endurance. He who cannot hold out in the march is lost or becomes luggage for others to carry. Let every man bear his own burden. In the Rebellion the seasoned soldier was far more dependable than the ninety-day recruit. He could endure hardness without discouragement. This also is a prime asset for a Christian life. Paul knew how to be abased as well as how to abound. He had lost the murmuring tongue if he ever had it, and the petulant spirit had been trained into one that rejoiced evermore and endured

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all things for the elect's sake. How splendid to count it all joy when we fall into manifold trials, knowing that the proof of our faith worketh patience! To become skillful in thrust and parry likewise appoints one to the list of invincibles. The mastery which Jesus manifested over Satan in the wilderness is a standard of skill for his followers. A multitude who would study to show themselves thus approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, would truly furnish for our Commander a Thundering Legion whose onslaught would sweep the field and save the day to a glorious victory. Discipline is what we need, and the toil it costs we must not despise.

3. *The soldier must endure the dreariness of the camp.* Flushed with purpose and eager to do things, what is more irksome than waiting? Keeping to the camp is dull and spiritless. The monotony evolves into restlessness and this into whispered mutiny. Campaigning is easier, and battle itself would be a relief. More desertions have occurred in the United States army because of unbearable monotony than from any other cause. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Winter quarters at Valley Forge tell this story. The soldier, in the desolate camp, in the dreary round of duty, grows sick unto death. What can he do honorably but endure the hardness and stand to the post? The Christian often camps on this same disenchanted ground. The missionary who waits a decade of years for a convert knows what dreariness means. The saint who has learned always to pray and not to faint has passed this way. Peter, who could not keep steadfast a few days, said, "I go a-fishing." Even the five wise virgins slumbered and slept when weary with waiting. We know not why it is, but there are times that try men's souls, when earth's moisture dries up and the heavens become as brass, when the wicked speak loftily and say, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" God's people seem to be down,

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and waters of a full cup are wrung out of them. They realize, with Faber, how

He hides himself so wondrously,
As though there were no God;
He is least seen when all the powers
Of ill are most abroad;

Or he deserts us in the hour
The fight is all but lost;
And seems to leave us to ourselves
Just when we need him most.

It is not so, but so it looks;
And we lose courage then;
And doubts will come if God hath kept
His promises to men.

It is here that patience comes to a finish in its perfect work and those who endure unto the end are saved.

4. *To be in readiness is a soldier's everlasting duty.* Who will excuse him if he is caught sleeping or unprepared? Yet what toil and prompting all this requires! The soldier is interpreted by his armor. The rusty sword and the clogged gun foreshadow defeat. The care for little things makes up his burden. The battle was lost for want of the general; the general was absent because his horse failed him; the horse failed through loss of a shoe; the shoe was lost from the absence of a nail. This is the old story of unreadiness and fits to the record of a thousand failures. Readiness is the great word for God's soldiers. Awake to righteousness, and sin not. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." What masterful readiness Jesus showed when he foiled the tempter in the wilderness! Paul was ready to preach to them of Rome or to be offered up. When he suddenly faced Agrippa in the royal court or a mob on the Jerusalem stairs his readiness won age-long victories for the truth. Put on the whole armor, and having done all stand, and while you stand keep your armor burnished with all-prayer, and you will never be put to confusion. Readi-

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ness begets confidence, which is only another name for faith. It is faith which has parted from fear and is the victory which overcometh the world. Sell all if need be and buy the pearl of readiness.

5. *In the soldier, the attack demands courage.* Nothing befits the soldier more than courage. It is the atmosphere of his thought on enlistment day. His stature in this respect increases as he walks the lonely night-watch. But going into battle shows of what sort he is. The advance is not always made with rush and huzzah. Sometimes the fateful hour is entered upon in dead silence. To push himself thus toward the black lips of the cannon's mouth requires unadulterated courage. The soldier does this.

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Who else but the soldier can thus epitomize courage?

The Christian must be like-minded. "Be strong and of a good courage," is his command from the beginning. This trait must be genuine and not imaginary. "Are you able to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" To this the disciples answered, "We are able," but they were not. It takes courage from the deeps of the heart to carry on the Christian's conflict. Thermopylæ and Marston Moor required not a better courage than men must have who wrestle against principalities and powers commanded by the rulers of the darkness of this world. A braggart courage like that of Goliath flourishes in the world's field like the rank weed. The Christian must grow something superior or fail. But failure is not to be thought of. The Davids and Daniels, the Luthers and Cromwells have produced that better courage which takes the world by spiritual violence. To the faint-hearted the battle is half lost already. To the man of courage—the heart-

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strong man, victory is the only goal. He knows his rights and privileges and never yields. He hears his Commander say, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops. And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end." And he endures as seeing him who is invisible.

6. *The soldier may be compelled to endure defeat.* So may the Christian be called to pass under the cloud. There are failures in capturing Ai and there are retreats from Moscow which have their counterparts in everyone who has had much experience in the world. A journey to the mountain top will dip into many a valley. The persecutions and the Inquisitions and Boxer Rebellions may not all be over and past. The martyr list is not likely complete. Some of God's people will yet see cherished designs come to apparent failure. What then? Endure as a good soldier. Be encouraged by him who was "persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed." It is only the eclipse of success that you thus experience. Your gold will be refined in the fire and your garments whitened through tribulation.

7. *As a soldier, endure, having respect unto the recompense of reward.* Moses forsook Egypt under this charm and every soldier small and great is under like inspiration. Sowing with the expectation of reaping is not sordid but saving. Fight the good fight of faith in hope of the victor's wreath and the conqueror's acclaim. It is sure to come. Paul saw for himself "a crown of righteousness," and who can tell how much it cheered his dark hours? Ye are saved by hope, and hope has its grip on eternity. Some day the Son of God will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." That entrance into the joy of the Lord will outrank all the triumphal celebrations of time, and its glory will last through eternity.

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 10

PAUL A PRISONER—THE PLOT

GOLDEN TEXT: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."—Psa. 91. 2.

BY WALLACE H. FINCH

PASTOR HIGHLAND AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
 OSSINING, NEW YORK

THE psalm from which the text is taken is an expression of confidence by a man of faith. The narrative from the Acts of the Apostles is the historical confirmation of the spirit and the letter of the psalm. The former presents to us a good man's assurance in the presence of possible danger; the latter an active man's safety in the presence of positive peril. The first is creedal, the second experimental; the one the heart's song of security, the other the life's lesson of peace. And these two are connected thus, as the subject of our thought.

I. *The creedal song of confidence.* It is a very noble one. Listen to it as the full measures of its faith roll out: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust." The personal pronouns are prominent, the affirmation of faith is clear, explicit, victorious too. It advertises that the man who held this faith was no insignificant puppet of circumstance in his day and generation. His life was surely not one of those wabbling uncertainties, the source of immeasurable sorrow to his friends and derision to his enemies. His days were not turned into a prolonged judicious suspense. He ventured on faith, and dared all through faith.

There is a possible peril in the land! Some one says the crying need of the hour is a refuge; if we had a fortress everything worth saving could be saved; every

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interest worth conserving could be conserved. If we had a huge pile of bricks and mortar we could get behind that, and all would be well. The psalmist suggests that it would be better to have God, and get behind him.

We cannot forget Robert Browning's "Instans Tyrannus"! It is the Tyrant who speaks. Out of the million or two of men he possesses there is one man not at all to his mind. He struck him, of course, but though pinned to the earth with the persistence of so great a hate he neither moaned nor cursed. He is nothing but a toad or a rat, but nevertheless the Tyrant cannot eat in peace while he lives with his abominable meekness to anger him. So he soberly lays his last plan to extinguish the man.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?
Did I say "without friend" ?
Say rather, from marge to blue marge
The whole sky grew his targe
With the sun's self for visible boss,
While an Arm ran across
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
Where the wretch was safe pressed!
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
—So, *I* was afraid!

The man who wrote this creedal song of faith would have been like that—would have "stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed"—and not all the tyrannies of life could have moved him from his hidden anchorage.

II. *It is a good thing, nay, it is a necessary thing, to have faith.* There is dangerous error in the world to-day. With all our progress and enlightenment we have not outgrown it. The tendency in some directions is to grow into more of it. One form of it is that we must hold our faiths lightly; that we must be exceedingly conservative and careful about our beliefs; that, after all, the great matter is not so much what we believe, but what we do; that our characters, our reputations,

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the measures of our prestige are the results of things done. Our faiths belong to the attenuated realms of the metaphysical. Whether we are orthodox or heterodox, materialists or spiritualists, believers in God or in mammon, it matters not so much what we believe, but only what we do. As if anyone in all this world ever consistently did right without believing right!

You cannot investigate very deeply the processes and methods of human volition but that you must discover that what we believe determines what we do. What we secretly accept fixes what we openly are. Our beliefs are the springs of conduct. All the dark things of life, the things which deaden the joy of life and silence the harmonies of life, which make of life a tragedy rather than a victory—these come from unfaith, or wrong faith, or no faith. Our most urgent need is not correct conduct, but correct believing; is not less positive faith, but more. We must relate ourselves in the terms of a correct relation to the spiritual and the eternal, and only faith can express this correct relationship. Herein is the explanation, perhaps, of our ineffectualness in the realm of great achievements for the kingdom of God. Our mediocrity in service is born of our hesitation in belief. The whole complex machinery of the church is paralyzed with a degree of impotence because we do not rightly believe.

It is vain for us to talk of putting away our differences of belief while we all come together and get things done. In a characteristically brilliant book Mr. G. K. Chesterton satirizes this disposition of modern life. He says: "Suppose that a great commotion arises in the street about something, let us say a lamppost, which a great many influential persons desire to pull down. A gray-clad monk, who is the Spirit of the Middle Ages, is approached upon the matter, and begins to say in the arid manner of the Schoolman, 'Let us first of all consider, my brethren, the value of light. If light be in itself good—' At this point he is some-

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what excusably knocked down. All the people make a rush for the lamppost, the lamppost is down in ten minutes, and they go about congratulating each other on their unmediæval practicality. But as things go on they do not work out so easily. Some people have pulled the lamppost down because they wanted the electric light; some because they wanted old iron; some because they wanted darkness because their deeds were evil. Some thought it not enough of a lamppost, some too much; some acted because they wanted to smash municipal machinery, some because they wanted to smash something. And there is war in the night, no man knowing whom he strikes. So gradually and inevitably, to-day, to-morrow, or the next day, there comes back the conviction that the monk was right after all, and that all depends on what is the philosophy of light. Only what we might have discussed under the gas lamp we now must discuss in the dark.” That’s Mr. Chesterton’s parable; and it is a good parable. We are suffering from lack of clearness in faith. We have no great creedal song of confidence in our hearts. Circumstances are too much for us because our faith is weak. In the dark moments of the Reformation Luther would cheer up his despondent friend Melanchthon: “Come, Philip, let us sing a psalm,” and together they would lift their voices in Luther’s own version of the forty-sixth psalm, “Ein, feste Burge ist unser Gott.” The psalmist sang, and so ought we to sing, “I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

III. *When we have faith we ought to affirm it.* The psalmist says, “I will say.” I am not going into the gloom and darkness of the cellar to repeat this creed of mine. I will publish it from the housetops—“I will say.” By my thoughts, by my words, by my deeds, by every element of my living, “I will say.” Now some one says, That is bad form to go about affirming one’s belief. Religion is so utterly sacred that we ought to

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preserve a dignified silence about it. One who wields a trenchant pen, recently in contrasting the conditions existing under the old restrictions of religious discussion and the modern freedom, wrote: "The old restriction meant that only the orthodox were allowed to discuss religion. Modern liberty means that nobody is allowed to discuss it. Good taste, that last and vilest of superstitions, has succeeded in silencing us where all the rest have failed. Sixty years ago it was bad taste to be an avowed atheist. It is still bad taste to be an avowed atheist, only now it is equally bad taste to be an avowed Christian." This is an exaggeration, but it is a most suggestive exaggeration. There is an eloquent silence among religious folk in conversation about religion. Yet there is great need in life for the affirmation of our faith. Ears are hungry for it; hearts sad and heavy wait in sorrow for it. Darkness is about the groping ones who are lost; and shall not we, who have found the path, send our hail of faith to them across the mountains? Once a traveler through the mountains became separated from his companions; a thick mist came up out of the east and robed the hills in its vapory garments; every landmark was obscured. He called, but there came no answer. At last in despair he threw himself down to await the coming of another and clearer day. He was lost. Just then he heard the call of his companions; everything about him seemed so changed in the magic of the mists that he thought they must be lost too; so he called across to them, "Are you lost too?" Back came the answer, "No, the way lies here! Come over here." Have we found the way? Then in the joy of that confidence let us hail the lost ones with our affirmation of faith, "The way lies here—I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: in him will I trust."

Now we come to the lesson narrative. The Golden Text, the heart's creedal song of confidence; *the lesson, the historical and experimental confirmation of the*

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faith it expresses! Here is Paul the man of action. This man of action is a man of faith. We ask, What is the practical value of faith? Humanly speaking he is in a very bad way. More than forty men have taken an oath that they will not eat until they have slain him. They have a very clever conspiracy to take his life. In its very simplicity lies its probable deadly effectiveness. They go to the chief priests and elders with the request that they shall ask of the Roman captain that Paul may be sent down in the morning to the council to answer some questions. When he comes they will kill him! A very clever conspiracy, one factor, and only one, left out of their consideration, Paul's God.

Now see how circumstances wait on God's man of faith; how Providence ministers unto him. A young lad—that's all God needs to frustrate the great conspiracy of more than forty men; a young lad with a lad's characteristic ubiquity. Then when the train of providences begin to move, see how it enlists the co-operation of august human agencies: a Roman centurion; two hundred Roman soldiers; seventy Roman horsemen; two hundred Roman spearmen; the governor of a Roman province—indirectly the whole great machinery of Roman power. Is this a conqueror moving to his triumph? Yes, God's conqueror moving to the vindication of his faith. This man too has "stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed." He too, out of the reality of practical experience, can confirm the psalmist's creedal song of confidence: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

It matters what we believe. Faiths do count. And when the heart is established in faith our lips should proclaim it. Never fear about faith's vindication. Experience kneels to faith. Professor Flint has splendidly said, "All history was meant to be a magnificent and conclusive apologetic for Christianity."

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 17

PAUL A PRISONER—BEFORE FELIX

GOLDEN TEXT: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men."—Acts 24. 16.

A PRISONER WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE

BY JULIAN S. WADSWORTH, D.D.

PASTOR CENTRAL METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
BROCKTON, MASSACHUSETTS

THE setting of the scene is dramatic. It was in the judgment hall of the Roman proconsular palace in Cæsarea. Felix was seated in his court of judgment. Paul, recently brought from his arrest in the temple at Jerusalem, was standing at the place designated in the mosaic pavement for the prisoner. Ananias and other chief priests and elders from Jerusalem, having been summoned to appear against the criminal, were there, hoping to secure his extradition that they might yet carry out the frustrated plot to murder him. Not being able themselves to plead in Greek or Latin, and being ignorant of the customs of the Roman court, they had employed Tertullus, a provincial lawyer, who was a practical speaker. The orator made his charge, bringing three counts against the defendant. In the first of these he was accused of being a public nuisance, in the second with being a ringleader among the sect known as the Nazarenes, and thirdly he had profaned the temple. The procurator, convinced that it was a trivial matter pertaining to the Mosaic law, and wishing to be through with the whole matter, but having a Roman sense of justice, felt that he must hear what the prisoner had to say in his defense, and nodded to him, indicating that he might speak for

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himself. Until then he had hardly looked upon the man, who had little in outward appearance to attract attention. Instantly there was something in the grace of his speech, the culture of his bearing, the calm dignity born of the inner consciousness of innocence and a peace of soul, which held the attention of the judge and of all in the room. Paul proceeded to meet the first and third of these accusations with flat contradictions. As to the second charge, he was quite willing to acknowledge that he belonged to a sect which his accusers regarded as heretical, but which he claimed held within it the true hope of God, and the resurrection of both the just and the unjust. It was at this point, and with the thought of the great day when he should stand not in the presence of an earthly judge but in the presence of God, that, lifting his head with all the dignity of one conscious of innocence, he declared that at all times he had endeavored to maintain a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men. Every eye in the judgment hall was now fastened upon the accused as he stood with a face reflecting the peace which filled his soul. Whatever storms were beating on the outer coasts of his life, his soul was anchored in a fair haven of peace.

Observe the reversed positions of the two men. It is true "conscience makes cowards of us all." The prisoner has become the kinglier of the two. The judge is the accused as he is now compelled to look back upon his own life and see it ever at variance with God and man, filled with greed, injustice, treachery, and blood as he had forced his way from the position of a slave to that of a courtier and Roman procurator in one of the most corrupt courts the world has ever seen. As Felix looks now upon the man before him it is as if he were standing in judgment. Footsteps are heard behind him, voices are crying out from the past; the world is as if made of glass and all the deeds of his blood-stained career are

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brought plainly into view. He might have cried with a later king whose guilt condemned him :

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

Again contrast the judge and prisoner: the one seated upon a throne with the delegated power of a king; the other in abject physical weakness standing at the prisoners' bar and yet with a guiltless conscience. The weaker has become the stronger. Youth with the fortune of wealth though cankered with guilt is on the one hand, while old age with the discomfort of poverty yet crowned with holiness is on the other. The one has spent years in seeking his own advancement, trampling upon the rights of others by degrading intrigues and unscrupulous services, seeking ever to please a suspicious emperor and thereby hold his office; the other has emptied himself of earthly honors, though his early life was full of promise of these, in order that he might be "made all things to all men, if by all means he might save some." What is that which marks the difference between the men? It is the conscience of the one accusing, while the conscience of the other approves and giveth peace.

This moral sense is a quality which distinguishes from others those of God's creatures to whom it is given, lifting them to a plane upon which they can talk with him and "think his thoughts after him." From its Latin derivation conscience enables one to "know with God," thus giving to man one of his most noble and Godlike qualities. It is the moral voice which speaks within saying, "You ought." It is a ray of divinity darted into the soul, or, as Solomon calls it, "a candle of the Lord." It discovers with its light of approval or disapproval the action. For instance, when God's law says, "Thou shalt not steal,"

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the mind immediately determines that a certain act which takes from another what rightfully belongs to him is the act of stealing described in God's law; then conscience comes in and in the name of God pronounces against the doing of that which the mind has declared to be stealing and which is forbidden in God's law. The value of this delicately poised moral sense in human life is seen at once, since upon it depends the knowledge that one is in harmony with the will of God. Not always is the care given to it that is due, and often it is most shamefully abused.

Paul says that he *exercised* himself always to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men. He gave the most earnest thought toward the keeping of a clear conscience. The word *asceticism* comes from the same Greek verb, but while we do not think of Paul in the usual sense of an ascetic, absenting himself from the world in order to maintain right relations with God, yet we should remember that even Paul gave constant heed to know God's laws and then endeavored with *ascetic* diligence to do them.

It is of the utmost importance that men shall study to know the Word, and when God's will is known to be quick in their obedience to it. Only in this way is possible the keeping of this precious *moral sense*. Without the instruction of God's Word, conscience may become an unsafe guide. It is one of the saddest truths in history that people have not always interpreted correctly the law of God, and acting upon a false interpretation have been led into error. The conscience becoming perverted has sanctioned grossest crimes. Saul himself, misled by wrong judgment, thought he was doing God a service by dragging to prison men and women who confessed Christ. Although he had done this ignorantly, yet he was in part to blame for not having more closely studied the Scripture in order to discover the true spirit of the Messiah, and also in that he had in a wrong spirit searched for

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truth. He said, "*Being exceedingly mad* against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." All forms of fanaticism are the fruits of a perverted conscience, resulting from a prejudiced reading of God's Word.

Paul before Felix was thinking of his life from the time when he was brought into the presence of Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had formerly persecuted but with whom he had now come into harmony. From that moment he had exercised to keep his conscience clear and to possess the peace which to him was more than all else in the world. No longer did he walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and there was therefore no condemnation, but peace with God. If in a complicated and powerful piece of machinery it were possible to give to one of the cogs a moral power which would enable it to choose its own movement, and after thinking about it for a time that little wheel made up its mind to go in the opposite direction to that of the movement of the machinery, for a moment there is in its life an awful tragedy. Its only safety is in moving in harmony with the power that moves the machinery.

All the world is in search for peace. Every heart that has ever beat has sought for it. Many are the directions in which the world is vainly seeking to find it. Some think it may be purchased with riches and give their lives for the acquirement of wealth. Others are assured that it may be found in some coveted social or political position. But when these are attained the soul finds itself still unsatisfied, because its larger being is seeking for harmony with God. And only when coming into harmony with him is true contentment found. It is into this haven of peace the soul comes when the conscience is void of offense.

Then should not the supreme thought of every one be to learn the will of God and knowing this to be willing to do it at any cost? If this obedience shall throw one out of gear with the world, bringing him to prison

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or even to the cross, yet will it bring him into unison with God where peace alone is found. The one who is a Christian having a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men has been at all times, whether in prison or on the cross, the envy of the world.

Through good report, and evil, Lord,
Still guided by thy faithful word—
Our staff, our buckler, and our sword—
We follow thee.

With enemies on every side,
We lean on thee, the Crucified;
Forsaking all on earth beside,
We follow thee.

Thou hast passed on before our face;
Thy footsteps on the way we trace;
O, keep us, aid us by thy grace:
We follow thee.

Whom have we in the heaven above,
Whom on this earth, save thee, to love?
Still in thy light we onward move;
We follow thee.

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 24

PAUL A PRISONER—BEFORE FESTUS AND AGRIPPA

GOLDEN TEXT: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 Tim. 1. 12.

BY HENRY A. BUTTZ, D.D., LL.D.

PRESIDENT, AND PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT EXEGESIS, DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, MADISON, NEW JERSEY

THE text is Paul's vindication of his life. He is writing the last letter of which we have any knowledge. He is in Rome, a prisoner, and is awaiting his martyrdom. The letter is to Timothy, whom he calls his "beloved son" in the gospel. The affectionate relations between Paul and Timothy are almost a romance in Christian history. From the time of Paul's first acquaintance with Timothy at Troas until this his last letter, we are assured of their intimate fellowship and mutual devotion. They are adapted to each other. Paul recognizes the piety, ability, and devotion of Timothy. Timothy realizes the grandeur, self-sacrifice, and leadership of Paul. Timothy was at this time pastor of the church at Ephesus, and Paul's last message is addressed to his favorite disciple. The greatness of Timothy is shown in his recognition of Paul's leadership and in his fidelity to that leadership.

The first clause of the text asserts Paul's reason for his sufferings, which sufferings have been the theme of poetry and of oratory through the Christian centuries. His own portrayal of them in 2 Cor. 11. 23-30 has awakened the most sympathetic interest from that time until now. Paul affirms that his sufferings were because he was the apostle of Christ. That he might

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preach the gospel to the Gentiles, no labor was too great, no sacrifice too painful or humiliating.

We see in this the greatness of the gospel. We cannot conceive of a man like the apostle Paul giving himself to a life of such toil and suffering for anything that was not worthy of it. We see in this passage also the truth of the gospel. We cannot conceive of the apostle Paul enduring so much, even unto death, for a cause of whose truth he was not absolutely sure.

He further affirms that he is not ashamed of the gospel: "Nevertheless I am not ashamed." It reminds us of his declaration in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, written long before, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." He walks courageously through life without shame proclaiming the cross of Christ which was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." He declares that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for two reasons: First, his knowledge. "I know whom I have believed." Paul affirms his belief in a person in whom his trust is absolute. The person is Christ. Paul declared that he knew Christ. Paul's knowledge of Christ was profound. He knew the facts of Christ's life. He was about the same age. He had in early life lived in the same city where the great events of Christ's life transpired, and these were known to him in such a way that he expresses absolute certainty concerning them. He must have met those who had conversed with Christ. His writing indicates a thorough acquaintance with the Master. Especially is he certain of the great fact of Christ's resurrection. Paul's testimony is therefore an affirmation not only of his personal faith in Christ, but also of the great historical facts of Christ's life as recorded in the Gospels.

Paul knew also the teachings of Christ. He refers to them again and again in his writings. He sometimes makes a distinction between his own statement and that of Christ when he says, "Not I, but the Lord."

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His acquaintance with his teaching is shown by the whole spirit of his writings. They are imbued through and through with the spirit of the Master.

Paul was convinced of his own call to the apostleship. He speaks of himself as the apostle of Christ. He calls himself the apostle of Christ again and again, and defends his apostolic authority with great vigor in the Epistle to the Galatians. He could well say, "I know whom I have believed." It is safe to say that from the time of the ascension of our Lord until now no one has known the Master better than his great apostle Paul, or preached him with more fidelity.

He further declares, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He says, "I am persuaded," that is, he was thoroughly convinced that Christ was able to keep that which he had committed to him. We may ask, what was it that Paul had committed to Christ? The Revised Version reads: "I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day," or, margin, "that which he hath committed unto me"; Greek, "my deposit." Some have thought that the deposit which Paul had placed in the hands of Christ was the gospel. That Christ had committed the gospel to Paul is clear. Writing to the Galatians, he says, "For I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." The gospel in Paul's view was no human invention, but was a direct revelation.

The text, however, refers to something which Paul had committed to Christ. Paul had committed his soul to Christ. In 1 Pet. 4. 19 it is said: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." This precious treasure which he gave to Christ when he called him to his apostleship

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he intrusts to him now in perfect confidence that he will keep it in the trying hours which are coming so soon upon him.

With his soul he commits all the conditions of his earthly life into the hands of Christ. He knows not with certainty what will be the outcome of his imprisonment, but he is confident Christ will not forsake him. He who has watched over his life amid privation and toil and persecution is still by his side, and he cheerfully trusts it all to his Lord's keeping.

He commits his future to Christ. He had seen his Lord and was sure that he would watch over his eternal welfare. In the tenth verse he speaks of "the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." In the last chapter of this letter, looking back over the past and looking forward to the future, he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4. 8). Paul had committed to Christ his life, his interests, his labors, his sufferings. Everything which he had belonged to Christ, and his confidence is unshaken that Christ will keep it to the end.

This is peculiarly suggestive in view of the circumstances in which this letter was written. Paul was standing face to face with death. He is now in strict custody, no longer free to go where he will under the guard of a soldier as in his first imprisonment. He knows not at what hour the summons may come to lead him forth to execution. He is gazing into the future with serene confidence and looking for the prize for which he had long been struggling, the blessed life beyond. He affirms with unwavering faith, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." What sublime confidence! What perfect trust! What absolute reli-

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ance on the Christ who had met him on the way to Damascus and who awaited him in the other world! This whole passage is rich in suggestiveness.

It suggests to us the certitude of the great facts which have come down to us concerning Christ and his church. History cannot be repealed. Facts must stand in their original character or not at all. Paul's belief is an assurance for us. Paul knew the historic facts of Christianity, and affirmed that they were true then. What was true then must be true now. The centuries cannot change the truth. The facts of Christ's birth, teachings, resurrection and ascension are so thoroughly established that we can place them alongside of any other facts which have come down to us from the past and we are assured of their truth, because it was Paul who says, "I know whom I have believed."

The text teaches us that the Christ whom Paul trusted is the Christ to whom we can commit our life. Every true life must be a life committed to something or somebody. If it would be at its best it must have a great purpose and a great teacher and guide. To whom can we commit ourselves so safely and so surely as to him whom Paul knew and trusted and to whom he dedicated his life? He will surely guard and guide every life that is intrusted to his keeping.

The text sets before us also the supreme knowledge, to know Christ. In the Epistle to the Philippians, written during his first Roman imprisonment, Paul utters a sublime wish, almost taking the form of a beautiful prayer, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." In Phil. 3. 8 he also says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"; which might perhaps be more precisely rendered, "for the preëminent knowledge," that knowledge which is above all other knowledge. He who knows Christ really knows all essential things, for in him "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "We are complete in him."

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This confidence of Paul, in his old age, as he gazes into the life beyond, assures us that the firm faith of the apostle will be ours if we follow his example. How did Paul reach such sublime confidence? He seems to have no doubts. There is not a hint of wavering in his faith. This statement of the text is clear, absolute, and unqualified. Its key words are, "I know," "I am persuaded." The explanation is that he had had a revelation on his way to Damascus. The reality of that vision of his risen Lord he never questioned. Again and again he referred to it as giving an adequate account for the change of his life from the bigoted Pharisee to the broad-souled Christian. The sight of Christ had transformed him.

Further, Paul had been a student of Christ ever afterward. His constant prayer was to know him, not only in the deep experiences of the soul, but in everything by which his knowledge might be increased. His divine inspiration did not prevent his patient study. Paul was a student even in his Roman prison. Writing to Timothy from Rome, he asks him to bring his books, but especially the parchments. What these parchments contained we will never surely know, but no explanation is more probable than the one that suggests that some, if not all of them, were the Old Testament manuscripts. We must imagine the apostle busy over his manuscripts, every sentence scanned, every word weighed, the historical setting fully considered. We can imagine no test of truth which the learned and logical apostle did not apply, and the result was a conviction as to Christ's Messiahship and power to save a lost world, which no circumstances of prosperity or adversity could change. We may not have Paul's inspiration, but we may imitate his study of the sacred Scriptures. This study under the influence of the Holy Spirit upon an open mind we believe will produce certainty of the great historic faith of which Paul was an inspired apostle.

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 31

PAUL A PRISONER—THE VOYAGE

GOLDEN TEXT: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."—Psa. 37. 5.

BY FRED H. DEMING, B.D.

PASTOR WASHINGTON STREET METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORK

THE striking feature in this lesson is the attitude and conduct of Paul the *prisoner*. He advises, rebukes, commands, prophesies. He is hopeful, cheerful, level-headed, and practical. And all this while the skies are black, and the winds are howling, and the sea is wild, and the sailors are in mutiny. So unusual is such conduct for a prisoner and in such contrast with the cowardice, terror, and lack of control of the sailors and fellow voyagers that it is worth while to inquire into it.

We recognize in the first place that Paul was a leader among men; this was his gift, his talent, his endowment, and he never hid his talent in a napkin. Whether as Saul the persecutor, or Paul the missionary, he is at the head—leading on—a pathfinder for others. Had Paul been a business man in these days, he would naturally have become a "captain of industry"; had he given himself to law, he would have stood in the front rank of those who interpret the hidden matters of jurisprudence; had he joined the ranks of the army, he would quickly have risen to a place of command. This power of leadership was in him, and he only needed to be true to himself to make others recognize his gift. It was natural, then, that under the very unusual and trying circumstances of a prolonged conflict with the winds and waves, when sails and oars and sheer muscle must be pitted against the powers of the darkness and the deep, those toiling should lose sight of the *prisoner* and see in Paul the *master*.

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But this explanation of Paul's conduct does not entirely satisfy us. We continue our quest, and we do not search far to find that the secret of the poise, confidence, and mastery of this man was his simple faith in the great God who rules on land and sea. His life from the moment of his conversion is a concrete illustration of the truth of the psalmist's words, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." God was very real to the apostle Paul. God had been real to Saul of Tarsus. But the revelation of God's character through Jesus Christ which had come to Paul when he was converted, his mercy, his love, his forgiveness, his personal interest in sinners, had brought God very close to Paul's life. It is this which always brings God near to the individual—not the sight of his face, nor the sound of his voice, nor the touch of his hand, but the knowledge of his love and his care and his pity. Christ said to his sorrowing disciples, "It is better for you that I go away"—that I may be nearer to you, and to all who shall know and love me. As G. H. Morrison has aptly said, "Those that are nearest may be a thousand miles off, if so be that they love and understand me."

Paul never lost this sense of the presence of God, or of his love for him. He believed that God had ordered and planned his life, and so long as he sought to know God's will and to place himself in harmony with that will God would care for him. Paul was not reckless. He did not run headlong into danger, nor did he court hardship, but he was absolutely fearless when in the path of duty. God was just as near on sea as on land. When Paul enlisted as a soldier of the cross he did not expect that the life which he had chosen would be free from trying experiences, or that he would be excused from the conflicts, the privations, and the dangers incident to the soldier's life. But he knew who was his Captain. He had faith in him. His only

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anxiety was to follow where Christ should lead, and to fall with his face to the front. No man could have been more sincere than he when he said, "I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Much of the restlessness, anxiety, and unhappiness of life is due to the fact that men are not where God wants them to be. They are seeking for fame, happiness, or wealth along paths of their own choosing, and miss the peace and rest which abides even in the midst of outward storm and stress when men are following God and duty.

I would rather walk with God in the dark
Than walk alone in the light;
I would rather walk with God by faith
Than walk alone by sight.

Paul also believed implicitly the word which God spoke to him. That God spoke to Paul no Christian can doubt. How God spoke to him we do not know—that matters little. We always make a mistake when we try to limit God's methods or ways. Nor should we always expect that the methods of God to-day will be as they were in the beginning. Paul knew that God spoke to him, and that settled the matter for him. He had received the message for this particular journey. He had been instructed that nothing should prevent him from seeing Rome. He had also been informed that not a life should be lost. This was the word, but in seeming contradiction were the angry sea, the ship growing weaker every moment, the hurricane more violent than ever, the sky overhead black and threatening, the sailors losing hope. Still Paul believed the word of God. His faith kept nerves quiet, muscles strong, head level, countenance cheerful, and voice without a tremor as he directed the work and cheered his companions in distress.

How faith in God and God's word will keep us steady

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in the hour of danger and trial! "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee"—these words were read in a home of sorrow, when a mother almost frantic with grief at the death of her beautiful daughter seized them to her heart, appropriated them to herself, and became as quiet and calm as a sleeping child. Physically, mentally, spiritually, there is nothing which so sustains and bulwarks a life in the hour when the winds blow and the waves dash high as a firm faith in God and his word. "These things have I spoken unto you," said Jesus, "that in me ye may have peace"; and then, lest they should misunderstand him and imagine that life was to be without storm and stress, he adds, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." This is the purpose, then, of the teachings of Jesus, the purpose of the promises of God, that believing them we might have peace in him.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take him at his word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

Paul's faith, however, was of a practical sort. He was not simply a visionary, a dreamer, sitting idly and waiting to catch some message which might be of some help, or for God to work some miracle in his behalf, while there was much which he and others might do. His faith comprehended the active coöperation of men with God. He did not expect that God would do anything for them which they could do for themselves. Nor did he think for a moment that God would deliver them unless they were obedient to the will of God. Men weakened by hunger and long fasting were not the kind who would be able to take part in the final rescue work which needed their attention. Neither does hunger make men optimistic or hopeful, so Paul summons the sailors to break their fast. Faint-

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heartedness, selfishness, deceit were also out of place when men were to be rescued by God. And Paul with authority declares to the centurion that unless the men who are seeking to escape by stealth in the boats return they would endanger not only their own lives but also the lives of all aboard. The disobedience of a few, or lack of coöperation, renders many a plan which God has for his people futile. There were ordinary means of lightening the ship, skill in directing and managing the vessel, labor of hand and of head that was still essential before their rescue could be accomplished. And Paul, the foremost in faith, is also foremost in works and in directing the work of others.

Faith and works may never be separated. They are always to go hand in hand. Faith without works will never save a man from shipwreck of body or shipwreck of soul. Saint Paul and Saint James are not at variance, they are each simply emphasizing one side of an important truth. Peter may not be able to unbar the gates of the prison which shut him in, but he can put on his sandals, gird himself, and follow his deliverer. These things he must do if he would find himself in safety. The psalmist when he wrote the words of the text, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass," was not placing a premium on laziness of brain or muscle. An old fable describes a teamster whose wagon is stuck in the mud, who seeing Jupiter Omnipotens riding by on the chariot of the clouds drops on his knees and implores his help. "Get up, old lazy one," said Jupiter, "clear away the mud, put your shoulder to the wheel, and whip up your horses." Men are to pray "as though everything depended on God" and are to work "as though everything depended on themselves."

Paul's faith is honored, his spirit of hope is vindicated, and, best of all, God is glorified in the safety of every soul on board. The ship breaks in pieces, but not until there is an opportunity for those who can

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swim to make their way to shore, while the broken pieces of the vessel afford the rest means of rescue. The experience of landing is not altogether a pleasant one. The island itself upon which they find themselves is strange. But they are all safe. Their difficulties are not all over, but God is with them and he will bring them to the desired haven. Fishermen of Brittany utter this simple prayer when they launch their boats upon the deep: "Keep me, my God; my boat is small and the ocean is wide." How appropriate this prayer for each one of us! We are out on life's ocean, we are so weak, so helpless, so ignorant. We pass through many a day when the sea is calm and the nights are still, and then there are times when the waves are dark and high and the sky is cold and lowering, when the hurricane suddenly breaks upon us. For the day of quiet, and the tempestuous night, we need the guidance, protection, and help which God alone can give, lest there occur that saddest experience of all,

For sadder sight than eye can know,
Than proud bark lost, or seaman's woe,
Or battle fire, or tempest cloud,
Or prey bird's shriek, or ocean's shroud,
The shipwreck of the soul.

The message of the text is personal. It calls each one of us to the personal venture of faith. "Roll thy way upon Jehovah" is the marginal reading of the text. Trust your life and all its interest to the hand of God. Not always an easy task this, for too often we desire to control our own affairs. But when we deliberately abandon ourselves to God, and yield to him and his care, we discover that he brings all things to pass for our good. Christ is the true pilot. He knows the dangerous places. "The winds and the waves obey his will." He has guided many a craft through the rocks and shoals without the loss of a soul. Commit the bark of thy life into his control, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass that in the morning you shall see the harbor.

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 7

PAUL A PRISONER—THE SHIPWRECK

GOLDEN TEXT: "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate."—Psa. 34. 22.

BY MORTON CULVER HARTZELL

PASTOR SOUTH PARK AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

THE Bible does not promise that the people who trust in God shall know nothing of sorrow. No good man or good woman will ever get through the world without trouble. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," says the psalmist three verses before this Golden Text, "but Jehovah delivereth him out of them all." God sends sorrow to good people because they can stand it best, probably. And others not so good need the help of noble examples of patience and final triumph. For the promise is that no evil shall overwhelm the righteous, but out of it all he shall come victorious.

Now, Saint Paul knew both sides of this promise. He had had a little experience by this time. He knew that God gives his children "hard work to do and loads to lift." He knew the dangers that threatened and the bodily ills that were sure to come. And he also knew the salvation which God gives his faithful servants, a salvation very present and real and full of a boundless hope for the future.

Our modern church needs a story like this one of Paul's shipwreck to lift it out of the deadly rut of pious convention and comfortable physical prosperity and give it once more the sense of the heroic. We all need it. God bless some of these historical novels even, that keep up for us a slight acquaintance with the rugged life of our fathers, the sturdy idealism of the past when men did not have millions, or even want

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them; when a man was rich if he had a clearing in the wilderness, a chance to work with his hands, and a loving family to love and serve.

But this story is true both in spirit and in fact. What a picture it is of a pagan, panic-stricken crowd, huddled together in fear of the horrible death that had threatened them with each pursuing wave for fourteen frightful days and nights! Soldiers and sailors alike, men of brawn and bravery on sea and land, all ready to perish of fright, actually forgetting to eat in the numbness of terror—all except Paul. Who is not proud of that little Christian? You would like to be like him, would you not? He is a man. A man may weigh three hundred pounds and yet not be a man. Isaac Newton, John Wesley, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Paul—all little fellows physically—but they can change the whole scientific world; they can revolutionize the religious life of Britain and conquer the new world for Christ; they can rearrange the map of Europe; they can crush the Roman empire of civilization. And the greatness of Saint Paul's character stands out as the dominating reality in this story.

Paul was not hasty about getting into trouble. He had traveled a bit—there are no travelers in history, past or present, like the great missionaries. Methodism has had her share of these. John Wesley went to the nooks and crannies of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales where not to this day is there a railroad station. Francis Asbury used to go from New England down the coast through the Carolinas and Georgia, then north and west over the Alleghanies, back through Pennsylvania, New York, and New England, every twelve months. William Taylor, as a young “forty-niner,” started out to preach the gospel in the streets of San Francisco. We see him again in India, where he lays the foundation of a new spiritual empire for Methodism. And then he gives his life to Africa. Up and down the Congo, in Liberia, far into the recesses

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of Angola, he preached to the blacks. And wherever he goes, in America, or England, or Asia, or Africa—everywhere, he is the preacher of salvation. Ah, these bearers of the cross, they know the countries, the seas, the winds, the sands, the heat, the cold, the sicknesses, the loneliness, the dangers, the glorious triumphs—they know the highest fellowship with God and man.

But in spite of Paul the traveler the ship set sail from Fair Havens. The captain knows more, of course, than any passenger. A sailor needs no advice from a landsman. Yet, when the fair southerly breeze, so full of promises, had gotten the ship well out into the middle of the Gulf of Messara, down from the Cretan Mountains that towered 7,000 feet above them, there came the terror of that sea, the typhonic northeast wind that Paul had feared. Dr. Ramsay tells us that a ship captain said to him, “The wind comes down from these mountains fit to blow the ship out of the water.”

Fourteen days and nights the great hulk drifts. The blast is the forerunner of a gale, a storm that will not cease. Strained by the first blow against the huge sail, there is imminent danger of sinking. The boat is bound together by great cables wound around the bow, the waist, and the stern, to keep it from literally falling to pieces. The sun by day and the moon by night are hidden from their sight. They have no compass. They know not where they are. The horror of engulfment in the great deep grows with the dread of the quick-sands of Africa. Death seems certain. They were heathen, except two or three prisoners. Think of the suspense and horror that for nearly two weeks' time kept nearly three hundred people from food. And then at midnight, above the shriek of the wind and the rush of the waves, above the prayers and cries of crazed men and women, there comes the voice of doom, the dull persistent roar of breakers ahead.

The men who know most about the sea know best what it can do. And sailors, in a panic, have ever been

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first to leave the ship. But Paul, by a quiet word to the stupefied soldiers, saved the sailors from themselves and saved the passengers thereby. And then into those dull minds, those panic-stricken hearts, those palsied long-starved bodies, he puts a little of his own hopefulness, sanity, and courage, by making them eat something. Think of it. He says grace in the midst of a storm at sea, over a few pieces of water-soaked bread at early dawn, with breakers ahead on a lee shore. And those heathen sailors, soldiers, merchants—great brawny fellows as they were—looking upon that little prisoner with Christian courage in his heart, as he thanks God for a chance to eat a bite before he dies, take courage to themselves. The panic leaves them, and now instead of a pack of craven curs, each snarling and biting his way to death, they are men ready to do their best for each other and themselves. Such is the power of a good example.

Now the battle is always half won when the panic is out and a man is ready to do his best. None of those men could have been saved had not Paul put his own Christian faith and hope into their heathen hearts. They did not know what it was nor whence it came, but they had it. So morning comes, and with it the stirring climax of the thrilling narrative. I like to think of that last great struggle with the surf. There is no fight like it. A man is like a log, a leaf, when the great seas come piling in, and curl over, and swallow him up in a mighty vortex of water, foam, and sand. The roar of a thousand cannon fills his ears, the pounding of a thousand hammers beats the breath from out his lungs, while the heavy hands of the undertow seize upon him to drag him down and back to death. Let him get a little foothold and it seems as though all the earth beneath him were sinking. Let him lift his head for an instant above the boiling chaos for one breath of life, and even there it may be that the despairing hand of a struggling friend may grip

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him in dying agony and together they find their grave.

But those sailors know how to swim. They are no longer craven cowards. They fight for life against the sea. They know when to ride upon the crest and when to dive beneath the foam. One lands. He turns to help his friend. The two together aid the rest, and one by one all are saved. The very men, who but a few hours before in the panic of the night had been ready to leave the whole ship to its fate, are the ones who alone could have saved the helpless passengers struggling in that deadly surf. It is true that a man in a moment of panic may be a very fiend. But once his better self is called back to life by some Christian example, that same man becomes the incarnation of sacrifice and helpfulness.

But that does not end the story. I do not know quite what you may believe about the story of the viper, but I would like to say simply this, that God can afford to work a miracle now and then for a man like Paul. He is ready to work a miracle in your life and mine if we are ready to do our best on sea and land.

It is not hard to make the application of this story. When we turn to the preaching and the life of a minister to-day, the life of a twentieth century church, we realize how much ruggedness we have lost, how many deep, strong, manly virtues have gone out of us. To be sure, we may not use the language our fathers used when preaching in the backwoods. The people who sit in the pews to-day do not dress roughly as the frontiersmen of earlier days. And yet, many a man who sits in our churches, well groomed and sober, is as vile a sinner as ever came cursing through the underbrush to the backwoods service of old. Many a woman to-day smiles and smiles and is a villain. Think of the men who will sell their friends, their neighbors, and their own souls for money, power, and fame. Great sinners are all about us and among us, even

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though we do not preach against them so much to-day. Christians do not wear chains, as a rule; they are not shipwrecked on the island of Malta very often. We have ocean-going steamers that will crash through any sixty-knot gale and come out with a smile on time.

But many a man is shipwrecked just the same. Not merely through his own sin, but through the changes of life that are sure to come. One of the best men I know on earth lost half a million dollars in a year and now lives from hand to mouth. A partner robbed him and a business panic came. I know a woman whose beloved husband died in a foreign land, and she is alone in the world—alone but for God. These are the subtler storms of life that no one can escape, and yet we do not realize the need of the greater faith and courage displayed by a man like Paul, until we find ourselves helplessly drifting before the blasts of adverse circumstance. The same primal virtues of early Christianity are needed in this day by each of us. Times may change. The manners and customs of centuries are very different, but the need for courage is ever present—in home, in business, in politics, in church, in sorrow and uncertainty. Faith in God, and devotion to his cause; ability to rise above all outer circumstances, no matter what they are, masters of ourselves and fate because we know we are immortal and God is with us—this is what we need to-day to meet our problems and insure the triumph of our Redeemer's kingdom.

Such courage is more than the brute nature which we have, the instinct of self-protection. The strongest men will find at last the deadly foe that strikes terror to the heart. The courage of a Paul comes from the knowledge of the eternal destiny of an immortal soul—a knowledge revealed only by him who broke the power of sin and death and opened the way to a clean conscience, a loving heart, and an eternal purpose. Paul knew Jesus Christ and was not afraid.

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 14

PAUL A PRISONER—IN ROME

GOLDEN TEXT: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”—Rom. 1. 16.

BY ROBERT S. CRAWFORD, A.M.

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
MALDEN-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK

PAUL says, “I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.” He had preached the gospel in many and great cities. In proud Philippi, in the face of persecution, he had gathered a society of much-loved Christians; in cultured and corrupt Corinth he had preached Christ and him crucified; in Athens, the “eye of Greece,” the “mother of arts and eloquence,” he had preached Jesus and the resurrection; in Ephesus, depraved by the worship of the great goddess Diana, he had turned away from that cult much people and endangered the craft of those who made silver shrines. He had dared to fight with wild beasts at Ephesus, but will he venture to enter the mighty city of Rome?

Rome was the greatest city in the world. The Roman empire was the proud mistress of the world, and the Eternal City was the center of Roman power. What wonder, then, if Paul had shrank from taking his gospel to Rome? He knew the Roman contempt for the Jews; and he was a Jew. In a city where Jews were not wanted a ringleader of the hated sect of the Nazarenes would stand but little chance of honor. And then his message—the gospel as he called it—how unreasonable and contemptible! It was about one Jesus, a Jew, a Galilean, put to death as a malefactor by his own nation, and by Roman authority, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive. And he expected

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the people, the Roman people, to quit the worship of the gods of their fathers, the gods lauded by poets, philosophers, and statesmen, and turn to the worship of this despised and crucified Galilean Jew.

But Paul knows the value of what he has and how greatly it is needed. A nobler, mightier kingdom than the Roman empire he would establish and extend. He would put men in possession of the pearl of great price. He would impart to them riches beyond the wealth of kings. He would lead each one into that living way that leads to the city beyond. And so he is not ashamed of the gospel even in the proud and powerful city of Rome.

The gospel is the power of God. Rome knew what power was. Her magnificent buildings and public works spoke of power; her well-made roads told of power. Her statesmen and legislators, framing laws that have left their impress on all succeeding nations until our day; her orators, convincing, persuading, swaying senators and people; her skillful and brave generals, leading great and well-disciplined armies that went from conquest to conquest, feared by the whole world—all show a people of unprecedented power.

But what is the power of man compared with the power of God? His lightnings shatter the proudest buildings. An earthquake from him destroys the greatest cities. What God's power can do is shown in creation. His power is manifested in the gospel. It is he that has brought all worlds into existence. It is he that upholdeth all things by the word of his power. He fainteth not, neither is weary. And the gospel is the power of God.

The gospel is the power of God *unto salvation*. Paul knew its power. He had had experience of its might. His rank Jewish prejudices it had removed; his haughty spirit had been subdued; his will had been surrendered to Christ; his stiff neck had bent to Christ's yoke; his bigotry had become broad catho-

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licity; his persecuting spirit had changed to liberality, his burning hatred to unquenchable love; he has been made a new man in Christ Jesus. He seeks to build up the cause he had destroyed.

He had seen its power in others. In various places he had seen its power displayed. To multitudes in Galatia and Macedonia, in Corinth and Ephesus, the gospel had been the power of God to save, lifting men from idolatry to the worship of the one true God; from wrath, anger, clamor, to the meekness and gentleness of Christ; from theft to honesty; from lying to truthfulness; from the manifold sins of their age and place to righteousness of heart and of life. And what he had seen accomplished by the power of the gospel elsewhere he knew it could accomplish in Rome.

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; and that means deliverance from sin and its guilt. Sin committed brings condemnation—a sense of God's displeasure—the wrath of God. An unforgiven sinner carries about within his heart a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries. One such exclaims, "Most full of scorpions is my mind"; another "O limed soul, that struggling to be free, art more engaged!" An inspired psalmist speaks of his feet having been "in the mire and the clay"; and another inspired writer, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Now, the gospel is mighty to deliver the soul from its guilt. Right here is the very gist of the matter. It is the revelation of the righteousness of God; of God's way or plan for justifying the ungodly, for making the sinner righteous. Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

But there is need of a right heart; and this the power of the gospel accomplishes. Accepting Christ as his Saviour from sin, the sinner becomes not only pardoned but renewed in the spirit of his mind. He

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becomes a new creature in Christ. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

But the sinner pardoned and renewed also needs dominion over sin; and this is included in this full salvation. Christ brings strength to the soul. The renewed soul becomes strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The renewed are dead unto sin and alive unto God. And how shall we that are dead unto sin live any longer therein? The spirit of adoption also is imparted, and a witness to our sonship is included. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirits that we are children of God. It includes also the leading of God's spirit. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. It includes a living hope of heaven. Such hope is an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil. It includes the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It includes a conscious harmony on our part with the purposes of God with respect to us and his governance of the world. It includes prospectively our glorification with all the saints in his presence.

Such is the salvation that the gospel which is the power of God secures, and of which Paul was not ashamed. Nor was he ashamed of the gospel in its range. It is for *every one that believeth*. It is not for one nation rather than another. It is for all nations, peoples, classes, persons: the low as well as the high, the poor and the rich, the ignorant and the learned, the worker as well as those of leisure, the foreigner as well as the native, the black, the red, the yellow, as well as the white.

Paul was not ashamed of the condition on which this salvation is bestowed—faith. It is for every one that *believeth*. The condition is right and reasonable and easy. The condition is right. It requires submission to God's will, and that is right. Shall not the subject submit to the king? Shall not the child obey

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the parent? Shall the creature rise against his Creator? The condition is reasonable. We are required to trust in Christ. He is worthy of our confidence. The gospel is worthy to be believed. And it comes to us well accredited. Who ever cordially accepted it and was disappointed? And the condition is easy. Were we called upon to do some great thing we might complain. But what is easier than to trust the trustworthy, to believe on evidence? To him who repents truly of his sins and turns to Jesus as the only Saviour it is as easy to trust in him as for a child to trust its parent.

Paul's confident glorying in the gospel as the power of God has been triumphantly vindicated. The things that gloried against the gospel in Paul's day—where are they? Those philosophies?—long since antiquated or relegated to the schools; that religion of the Greeks and Romans?—of merely antiquarian interest; that Eternal City to which Paul wrote?—a venerable relic of an ancient civilization. But Paul's gospel has gone on enlightening dark minds, emancipating enslaved consciences, instilling in men's hearts the love of God and the love of men, destroying idolatry, winning nation after nation to Christ the Lord, so that no influence down the ages can be shown to have exerted such power as the gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

How little may we in our day be ashamed of the gospel! Nineteen centuries of gospel history look down upon us; and when has its power been exerted so widely and so grandly as now? The fairest, best, most influential portion of the world is Christendom. Never before have the followers of Christ been so inspired with a mighty enthusiasm to take the world for him. Turn our eyes where we will, we find Christ's gospel exerting its mighty influence. Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows? The cultured classes. They are being drawn to Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The working classes. They recognize in the Car-

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penter of Nazareth the toilers' Friend. The neglected masses of the slums won by kind Christian interest to him who was the friend of publicans and sinners. Who are these that fly as doves to their windows? Italians, brought in the wisdom of God to this land of gospel light that they might find the Saviour of Paul, who preached the gospel to their remote ancestors. The rich in larger numbers than ever before are laying at the feet of him to whom the men from the East presented gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh —countless millions in humble gratitude to him who has brought to them the true riches. Who are these that speak for Christ in legislative halls that rule in righteousness? Men permeated with the Spirit of Christ. Who are these in Asia, in Africa, that are flocking to Christ by the thousand, the ten thousand, and, soon, as faith sees, by the million? God's dusky children of the Dark Continent; God's other children of Japan, Korea, China. And what does it all mean? That still, as ever, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. And we need not be ashamed of the gospel. Nor need we lack faith in its future greater triumphs. Christ will go forth, conquering and to conquer. The time is hastening when a nation will be born in a day. The gospel will destroy intemperance, purify society, cleanse politics, end wars, restore a sense of human brotherhood, save the heathen to the ends of the earth.

Our work is to accept the gospel; to live the gospel in its fullness of life; to teach the gospel as widely and as thoroughly as we can; to preach the gospel; and to regard the honor of being called to do so as the greatest honor that can be conferred by God upon man; to get as many as we can to believe the gospel, and so be saved by its power; and not to be ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 21

PAUL'S STORY OF HIS LIFE

GOLDEN TEXT: "He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—2 Cor. 12. 9.

UNANSWERED, YET ANSWERED

BY GEORGE VAN DERVEER MORRIS, D.D.

PASTOR CENTENARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

UNANSWERED prayer has ever been a stumbling-block in the path of weak and immature Christians and of those onlookers whose chief aim in life seems to be the search for flaws in the religion of Christ. "Don't say anything to me about Jesus," said a broken-hearted father whose beautiful and accomplished daughter lay stricken in the bloom of her winsome womanhood. "No one has ever prayed more earnestly than I have. And I promised God that I would give him my whole life! But he took her and I am full of curses." And he turned away from the smiling face and the outstretched arm and groped alone in the dense darkness. "I am rebellious," wrote a lady to her friend. "I have prayed all these years for this loved one, and now in his old age, when he ought to be at peace, God permits this calamity to destroy the serenity of his waning day." And she turned away from the smiling face and the outstretched arm, for with tear-bedimmed eyes she could not see; and with the noise of her own complaining she could not hear the tender voice of love. A young Christian recently came to his pastor in great distress. There was a certain unpleasantness in connection with his daily work that he could not bear—"Anything but that!" he said. Yes, he had prayed

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about it again and again without result, and now he felt that he must get away from it. The pastor simply pointed to this story of the great apostle's struggle and prayer.

Paul had not been traveling a way of roses since he had begun to preach the gospel of the kingdom. He had found some stones and thorns and pitfalls in the way. Read his catalogue and marvel! But of these he made no complaint, for he was made of the sturdy stuff of which heroes are made. The man who had himself persecuted the Christians did not expect to escape persecution. But there was one thing that did annoy him. There is always "one thing" above every other. We can put up with many hard things, but this "one thing" seems to be a little beyond endurance. Paul called it his "thorn in the flesh." He prayed earnestly three times that he might be delivered—and his prayer was not answered. He might have turned away with bitter complaint, but instead he has recorded for us the revelation that came to him—because his heart was open to receive it—that has brought comfort to many, enabling them to bear the "one thing" that they thought was unbearable. The very tense of the verb, "He hath said" (A. R. V.), makes it a general principle suited to all times.

With this thought come certain suggestions concerning God's attitude to prayer, and especially "unanswered" prayer.

God hears the prayers of his children. He heard Paul's pitiful cry. He heard that prayer of distress from the father's heart in behalf of the stricken daughter. He heard the cry of that woman on behalf of her suffering loved one. He hears thy cry. O troubled one; though the heavens seem brass to thee, he hears thy cry!

God is profoundly interested in his children. He is mindful of us when we pray and when we do not pray. He sees our condition, he knows our frame, he remem-

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bers our limitations, he pities us. When Paul prayed for relief, it was to a sympathetic and interested friend. There is something in that alone. When I am in deep sorrow and feel that I must tell it to some one, I do not go to any one but to that one who is interested in me, who sympathizes and understands; that in itself is a comfort. Paul knew to whom he was going with his trouble. The simple thought that the One who created the universe is mindful of us, is interested in our little affairs, is sympathetic in the hour of trouble, is blessed in itself. As the child in the moment of mortification or pain runs to its mother and hides its face in her lap, certain of her sympathy, so we may run to God, assured of his love and sympathy.

God answers the prayers of his children. It is true he has his own methods which we do not always see and understand. But sometimes the answer is direct and absolute. Every Christian can give testimony to this. How near God seemed! How real! What visions of our blessed relationship! What glimpses into the great sources of power! But often our prayer is unanswered, as we understand it. Why does not God answer all the prayers of his children? Some of their prayers are unanswerable, for man's freedom must limit God. God will not directly force men into certain courses of action, because it would change man's nature. Some prayers, if answered, would preclude the answering of the prayers of others. It would sometimes mean inconvenience and disaster to other men. Again, God sees what his children cannot see—the future and its relations to the present. Prayer is often unanswered because of this knowledge. If we could see the meaning of that prayer as God sees it we would not offer it. We would stand back from it in horror. Some prayers God answers indirectly; by overruling that which seemed an evil; by making the wrath of man to praise him; by making things apparently unrelated and unsympathetic, and even intrinsi-

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cally evil, to work together so that their result is good and a veritable answer to prayer.

We forget God's purpose; not the pleasure of his children, but character. Christian character means strong hard things. Mr. Stoddard said when he looked at the beautiful bust of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford that he was made to think of the rough block of marble and the many blows that had been required to bring it into beauty and perfection, and then of how like it was to the great man himself, whose character had been perfected by the blows that had seemed the hardest and that had hurt the worst. We naturally pray for the bright, the beautiful, the easy things. God sees, often, that these things will make us weak and flabby. Then in infinite love and tenderness he turns a deaf ear to our cry and in the place of the things our souls crave we find ourselves under the blows of his chisel. When we longed for rest and repose we found toil and sweat and sleepless nights. All this seems unlike our conceptions of God. But we must bear certain things in mind:

First, Christianity does not mean a shelter from the storms of life. Many invitations to the unsaved are based upon the assumption that Christianity is a haven in which the storm-tossed on life's sea might find security. Then, Christianity is not a call to idleness and repose, but to the grandest achievement. If any evangelist or preacher or teacher gave you the former impression, either he did not understand the truth, or else his fondest desire was to catch the namby-pamby sort who would bite at that kind of bait, in order that he might gain the greater credit as fisherman, forgetting that that does not depend upon numbers alone, but upon the kind of fish and the effort required to land them. Hence, some manly men have developed a contempt for religion based upon this misapprehension. We have history for the statement that Garibaldi told his men that wounds and suffering untold would be

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their lot, and even death awaited them, but that Italy free would be the result. And the weary fellows replied, "We are the men!" So I like to foretell fights, in spite of your prayers to the contrary, and suffering beyond calculation, but it means not only character for you, but the crowning of the King. And I think I hear the cry from the manly sort, "We are the men! We are the men!" And finally, Christianity does not mean a "flowery-beds-of-ease" elevator to heaven, but a "climbing-the-mountain-way-steep" journey, with wounds and bruises and weary feet. If any man has thought that heaven was a certainty because he joined the Church, he has made the mistake of his life. Saint Paul himself saw the danger of losing the prize. If you have been praying for the gentle wafting heavenward you must have forgotten the weary, painful pathway your Master trod. In spite of your longings that voice themselves in prayer you may expect the sweat and blood and the heart anguish; you may look forward to working out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Why do I preach this kind of gospel? Ought I not to hesitate? Ought I not to tone it down with gentle tactful words. Nay, nay! I find no warrant for that. I preach it because I have God's word for it. I preach it because it means Christian character. One sturdy fellow who makes the start in full view of the facts, with fists clenched, with teeth set, with throbbing heart, but with eyes fixed on the summits, is worth a dozen of the kind who make the start and who think the victory is thus won; or who pray for an easy path and then fall away at the first obstacle. I preach this gospel because it means God's opportunity. God endows every man with a personality. "To thine own self be true" should be his motto. But that is not enough. He needs something more. He is never fully himself without God. Self plus God equals the being God intended. Now, it is a well-known fact that God

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does not get his best chance at us except in adversity. Man is so full of life and energy and self-assertiveness that he does not think to call in God. But when the storms gather, when the clouds settle down like a thick pall, when the billows rise high, threatening to engulf, then he remembers the God asleep hard by, and, with a cry of anguish, having done his own utmost best, he seeks the application of the divine strength to his own weakness. Hence, to go back to the old figure, the thorn in the flesh is often allowed to remain because God transforms it into a lever to elevate the soul. So, some prayers remain unanswered; but in the grace and strength applied, not only is the contingency met but the soul becomes *itself*, and the unanswered prayers are the ones most grandly answered. Hence Saint Paul, catching the idea, rises to the loftiest summits of human sublimity when he says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Let me catch the same spirit! Not that I would pray for calamity or distress, but that I would accept it as answer to my human prayer, that God's strength may supplement my frailty! "So, by my woes to be Nearer, my God, to thee, Nearer to thee!"

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 28

PAUL ON SELF-DENIAL

GOLDEN TEXT: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth."—Rom. 14. 21.

THE LAW OF SELF-DENIAL

BY CHARLES A. HOLLA, D.D.

PASTOR CENTENARY METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
NEW YORK CITY

ST. PAUL's Epistle to the Romans is a masterpiece of epistolary composition, standing among the noblest and best of the apostolic writings. For reach of thought, dignity of expression, concise and logical statement of the fundamental ethical principles and the cardinal doctrines of the primitive Church, it would be difficult to match and perhaps impossible to surpass it anywhere in the broadest ranges of inspired truth. For the sentiment it breathes, the practical truths and precepts it enunciates, and the nobility of personal character to which it calls, it must stand and shine forever among the choicest passages in the literature of the race. Nowhere in the record of his words, or in the ranges of his ministry, does the great apostle reveal so much of the tenderness of his heart, the generosity of his nature, or the regal grip of his masterly intellect as when he pens this letter to the Roman world. This epistle takes deeper significance when we recall to whom these noblest of precepts and classic sentiments were written. Not to the noble Roman senator, philosopher, bard, or family were these words uttered, but to the Jew, the *Roman Jew*, who dwelt in exiled poverty in the Ghetto beyond the Tiber. To these lone spirits, sitting by the wayside, crushed by the burdens of a hopeless oppression, this epistle

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came like a song of hope, and with a note of triumph that inspired them to new endeavor after holiness.

The Golden Text of this lesson is one of those clear, practical precepts for which this epistle is famous. Saint Paul declares that *self-denial*, or self-sacrifice, is the supreme law of life and conduct. This principle is clear as the light, wide as the spheres, and as far-reaching in the grip of its authority as the limitless ranges of life and thought. There is no place in life, no realm in moral or spiritual activity, or sphere of personal responsibility, where its voice is not heard. By this law of self-restraint men have grown great, and nations have risen from obscurity to places ofregnancy and power, from which they have dominated the policies of the world. Each worthy triumph over self, each great achievement in the annals of the race, and every mighty epoch that stands in the path of humanity as a milestone to mark the progress of the race is a child and product of this law. By this law the saints and heroes of every age and people have been immortalized, and particular places of the earth have been made sacred.

The feature of particular importance and value in this passage we are studying is the special emphasis Saint Paul puts on the *Christian* element of the law—self-denial for the *good of others*. This was a new putting of a great law that was wholly unknown to the ancient world. Not in the wisdom of the Egyptians, nor in the subtle philosophy of the Greeks, nor in the military genius of the Romans, was it suspected, much less taught, that any man should deny *himself* for the welfare of his fellows. This feature of the law contradicted at once, and completely, the old and accepted theory that a man might live utterly regardless of the interests of the other man. It gave the world a new law, and created a new standard of values by which each man should test his character and guide his conduct toward his fellow men. It was to the selfish,

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sensual world of Nero, Quintilian, and Cato, which regarded the poor as “loathsome,” “animated tools,” and “cattle of the straw,” that Saint Paul wrote this exhortation to self-denial and sobriety for the sake of the *other man*. It was the Mosaic law that first said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” It was the spirit of Christianity that first put positive emphasis on the Golden Rule of conduct; and of teachers—many, mighty, and wise—it remained for Jesus Christ *only* to exalt man’s duty to man to the same level of obligation with man’s duty to God. It was Christ who said the *first* law is, “Thou shalt love God,” and the *second* law, equal to the first, is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”

The lesson is an unanswerable appeal for total abstinence of every kind where indulgence would work an injury to the weaker man. Therefore, if meat offered to idols, if wine as a beverage in the home, society, or family function, or if doubtful amusement, weaken or make any man’s grip on life less certain, it is the undoubted duty of the Christian wholly to abstain.

The mission of the gospel is to encourage and care for the man who cannot care for himself. Isaiah’s song of hope, as interpreted by Christ, is the mission of the Messiah. To preach to the poor, heal the broken heart, give sight to the blind, and deliverance to the captive, this was Christ’s understanding of his personal work (Luke 4. 16-20). For this reason Jesus mingled with the lowly and distressed, and defended his conduct in Jerusalem, in Samaria, and particularly in Perea, by declaring his mission was to seek the lost, heal the sick, save the sinner, and lift up the man who was down. This contradicts the theory of men. It is not the survival of the *fittest*, but of the unfit; not of the strong, but of the weak; not for the man who leads the procession, but the gospel goes back to bring up the man who lingers behind. Its mission is to make the unfit fit to live and to furnish weak men with powers that will

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equip them for life. The blind, lame, halt, leper, and the sinner—all disqualified for some reason to live, the gospel supplies with new power and help. The key-notes of the Sermon on the Mount, the discourse at Capernaum, and the conversation at the well of Samaria are all true to this central truth.

I. *The law on life's threshold.* There are certain inflexible laws that meet men on the threshold of life and predetermine life's successes or failures. No law is so invincible or irrevocable as that of self-denial. This law of temperance in all things reigns supreme in each realm of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual pursuit. It cannot suffer failure or fracture. Let no man hope or dream of any splendid achievement or ascendancy over his fellows who will not yield fully to this law. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." There is the statement, clear-cut, and upon the highest authority, of the supreme law. Mastery of self, the utter abandonment of selfish pursuits and pleasures to the task to be accomplished, is the key to the mastery of the world. He that rules his own spirit is mightier than he who conquers a city. For this reason life's clearest visions, deepest secrets, greatest victories, and profoundest joys are given to self-denying souls. If any man will become great in any walk of life, in society, business, scholarship, or character, he must obey this law. Self-denial for others is the highest fulfillment of this law.

II. *It consecrates places and institutions.* There are some places, institutions, and objects that men value above the purchase price of silver or gold. The institutions of life and liberty, of church and home, of the family and nation, purchased by the self-denial and blood of the martyrs and patriots, are sacred beyond the computation of material values. It is not simply vulgar, but sacrilege, to speak of them in commercial

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terms. Ask Ireland what she would take for Muckross Abbey, Ross Castle, or the graves of O'Connell or the early Celts. Ask England at what price she values Westminster Abbey or Saint Paul's Cathedral. Ask Philadelphia how much she will take for the old cracked Liberty Bell. What would America take for her institutions of liberty, benevolence, and learning? And if it be not wicked to ask, how much would a man take for his mother's grave? And why are these spots and places sacred beyond price? Are the old moss-grown stones of Muckross, Westminster, or Saint Paul better intrinsically than the pavements of the streets? Is the metal of the old bell any better than the iron of our stoves? or is the soil richer or the flowers sweeter that grow over mother's grave? The why of the value is in the fact that each object stands as the tangible expression of some great sacrifices or marks the place of some great self-denial. The graves over which men linger longest, the sacred shrines to which men make pious and patriotic pilgrimages, and the memories that awaken the wildest enthusiasm are all made sacred by the self-denial of noble souls. Blot from the world's history the spots, institutions, and memories that have come this way, and the world will become poor, for you will wipe from the annals of the race the great epoch-making battles, the sweet songs of hope, and all the immortal memories that bless the home, the church, the state, and individual life.

III. *Immortalizes men.* Every man who has lifted himself above the level of his fellows, so that he could be seen in any walk of life, has done it in obedience to this law. Call the roll of the immortals—the saints and heroes of every age and people—who tower in heroic grandeur above their fellows, the splendor of whose thoughts and achievements has made the history of the world—and ask whence have they come and how grown so great. At what fountain of enchanted water did they stoop and drink and slake their thirst for

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power; into the splendor of what starlit skies did they look and read the lessons of life and liberty; and where did these dreamers of immortality pillow their heads, that they dreamed so wondrously while sleeping and wrought such marvels when awake? And there is but one answer to the question, and but one secret of their place and power—self-denial and self-sacrifice. This has been the sustaining grace and impelling motive by which men have written their names large in the annals of the race. The men who have picked from the dust beneath their feet the extinguished torches of life and liberty, and, relighting them by their own inspired genius and power, have carried them far afield into the surrounding darkness, have been self-denying souls. By this rule Moses, the child of the Nile, rose from his basket of bulrush, gathered the wisdom of the Egyptian, accepted the poverty and exile of a despised people, turned his back upon riches and honor, and, by so doing, became the sublimest bard and prophet of the Hebrew race. By this law Elijah the Tishbite became the type and representative of the prophetic order and the harbinger and forerunner of the coming Christ. Nor did the Master ignore this rule (Phil. 2. 6-11).

The greatness and supremacy of the law is in the fact that, as man approaches the end of life and calmly reviews the past, the memories that bring him satisfaction and pleasure are not those of self-gratification when intemperate in life and pleasure, but the hours when he denied himself and yielded his life in self-sacrifice for the good of others.

This is the law of life, increase, and harvest for every man, in every age and for every department of life. Give and it shall be given to thee, good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over. For to every one that hath (and giveth for service) shall be given, and he shall have an abundance. Therefore it is more blessed to give than to receive.

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 5

PAUL ON THE GRACE OF GIVING

GOLDEN TEXT: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—Acts 20. 35.

BY WILLIAM D. PARR, S.T.D.

PASTOR GRACE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, KOKOMO, INDIANA

IT is remarkable that the four evangelists missed this strong statement of our Lord. Probably Paul got it from Peter; but Luke recorded it. It summarizes, as nearly as one sentence can, the life of Christ. It is a bit of a paradox, which makes it thought-provoking and compels attention.

I. Receiving from others is not condemned; but a comparison is instituted in favor of giving. Giving is "more blessed"—that is the point; indeed, it is essential to well-being. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

Receiving is not to be despised. There are times when it is noble and elevating. When a gift expresses confidence, esteem, and, in a sense, reward, it is alike honorable to the giver and to the recipient. Garibaldi must have been delighted when the Italian government provided a beautiful home, for the joy and comfort of his declining years.

Best of all is that "getting" that promises the greater joy in enlarging one's possessions in order to have more to give again. Jacob's well must be full of water before his families and their flocks can be refreshed. Why the wells, if they are not to be filled? Likewise the wells of salvation?—and God has provided many of them "in

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the valley of Baca," opportunity. Great and noble minds must be cultivated, filled to overflowing of knowledge, inspired even of God. Teachers must be taught, ministers prepared, so the blessedness of giving may go on forever. Can you get water out of a pitcher, when there is none in it? No! No! Receiving is fundamental, but in trust. Whoever receives wealth of knowledge or of the world, and refuses to give liberally out of his storehouse, does it at the peril of his own soul.

II. More blessed to give than to receive is the reversal of a natural disposition. This is what Christ set out to do, exactly. Receiving, or getting, seems to be, as the world goes, more blessed. It is the law of the animal kingdom. It is the lowest possible level of life, and almost too universal. It represents cunning, the longest paw, or the greatest force in some form. When the Lord struck at selfishness he struck hard. He knew a complete reversal only could bring out beauty and give satisfaction to the soul. About the first thing a little child will do is to reach out with unsteady hand, and draw, if possible, the object sought to itself. You have noticed a little fellow work hard at this, and it sticks to folks as they grow older.

It is easy to get the habit of receiving, and it is well enough, if the motive is high. "Get all you can, save all you can, give all you can," was divinely done by Mr. Wesley. After the manner of our Lord, it is far removed from the level of a selfish man, a spoiled child, or a ravenous beast.

Mere receiving is easy and requires no talent whatever. What a great disturber Christ was! By a single idea or a lofty proposition he reverses things. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." It is human nature to want, to grasp, and to regard all as undone, if you give freely; but it is low human nature. Dr. Franklin gave a library of five hundred volumes to the town of Franklin, Massachusetts. Horace Mann was

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indebted to this library so greatly that in referring to it in later years he said he would like to scatter libraries broadcast over the land as a farmer sows his wheat. Mr. Carnegie has practically done this, absolutely voluntarily. What unbounded joy he must have! Is it any wonder he is so youthful, bright, and capable, even under the burden of cares and years not a few?

III. The divine view of human life is that the supreme good is in giving. It is the atmosphere of another and upper kingdom. The sharp tooth, the longest arm, and the keenest cunning are not at home here. Selfishness is put under. Christ's exposition of the grace of giving is revolutionizing the world—slowly, maybe, but surely. How account for the growing generosity of men, the far removal from heathenism, but for his lofty teaching? Then, "he went about doing good"; giving always, and giving everything at his infinite command: the Eternal Fountain opened, whose waters ceaselessly flow. This is the Uplifter, lifting the world to his level.

1. His spirit makes real heroes. Who are they? Farther are we drifting from the notion that men noted for official position, great intellect, or great wealth are heroes—if no more can be said of them than this. If they use position, talents, and wealth for the good of others no one disputes their right to wear the crown of glory. So dominant is this sentiment that one of our modern kings of finance declares it quite unpardonable if a rich man dies other than poor.

Christ's test of greatness is service for others. Unselfish souls, who give themselves almost to slavish service for others, are our heroes; no others can enter here. Give rather than receive if you would stand forever with the noblest of all time. Every age will have its heroes, and only those whose lives are filled with the spirit of Christ for service can be found among the immortals.

It is not easy to be a consecrated giver of time or

wealth for the good of others—that is, not easy for most folks. It means a struggle at first, but ends in selfishness going down. It is a terrible battle often, and the enemy must be stood over, “sword of the spirit” in hand, or he will rise again; but it is a “good fight.”

2. Tithers are heroes. They win the greatest victory when they conquer themselves, by God’s grace. A Mormon woman said, “It takes faith to tithe.” A liberal and frequent giver to God’s cause was recently complimented on his fine way of giving. He immediately said, with great emphasis: “I am naturally stingy. I have an awful time with myself. It hurts me to give; I just have to force myself to it. I must give, however, because I know it is right.” This is really heroic, so much so that not many, comparatively, have reached the tithers’ way of accounting to the Lord. George Peabody said: “It is sometimes hard for one who has devoted the best part of his life to the accumulation of money to spend it for others; but practice it, and keep on practicing it, and I assure you it comes to be a pleasure.” “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”

3. Those who give themselves give most of all. What is money compared with a personal offering, either of self or some loved one, to a worthy cause?

IV Giving in the spirit of the Master elevates the giver. A word of good cheer or any service may give comfort to him who receives; but no one can receive so much good as the giver himself. “Blessed” seems to be a word dripping like a honeycomb in this connection.

It is the essence of selfishness for anyone to refuse to do anything unless quite sure it will first result in personal benefit. But there is a sense in which everybody should ask, when about to do an unusual thing, “What effect will this have upon my life?” The subjective side of this text is worthy of the profoundest

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consideration. All action has a subjective force. To be receiving always is very dangerous: it makes one self-centered. Selfishness grows like a cancer under such conditions. Moral and spiritual degeneracy are not far off when happiness depends upon fresh and overflowing streams of praise or benevolence.

God's plan is to build men up in themselves. Elevated character is the result of elevated thinking and living. Happiness, peace, courage, all the fruits of the Spirit, ripen from within: they are products—results that come of a law as immutable, and therefore as certain, as the law producing results in the wheat field. A man cannot reach elevation of character who gets all he can from others and gives nothing in return. Compliance with God's plans brings certain results. The reverse is likewise true. To elevate a race you dare not give them too much; indeed, very little. Each man must receive to enlarge and give again to others. So he becomes a producer, self-respecting—in a sense, independent—conscious of power, and is entitled to enjoy a degree of happiness because of his elevation above the shiftless pauper.

To be ever giving, thinking, putting in time sympathizing, consecrating strength, actually having tired and aching bones by times, spending money as wisely as possible on behalf of others—this is sowing the sweetest and noblest of seeds in the fertile soil of our own souls.

This all means elevation of character, that lofty disinterestedness that forgets selfish ends. It is the level on which Christ lived. It is not impossible to walk thereon. The great servants of the race have shared in his glory. They have a blessedness that positions, titles, lands, of themselves, can never give. As we give out of ourselves, we gain in enjoyment of life. The teacher is taught; sacrifice brings inward peace and joy. You see here plainly the footsteps of our Lord, "who for the joy that was set before him endured

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the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Paul apprehended the spirit of the Master so thoroughly that no one yet has surpassed him, but many have equaled him. The result in Paul's case all the world knows to this day. What is wanting in his consecration? Plainly nothing. He lived in such an atmosphere that he could triumphantly say, "None of these things move me," when the world was doing the worst it could against him. Like his Lord, he gave himself and all he represented for others.

It is not for the missionary alone to know and develop the divine secret of a blessed life. Each in his place, from the humblest to the greatest, can, out of great and countless blessings, give to others. Every disciple is obligated to do so. Paul said, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Every disciple can give at least one thing. Our Lord made arrangement for a cup of cold water in his name. There are but few disciples who cannot give many things. The poor are ever with us: not poor in purse, maybe, but very poor in spirit; thousands quite devoid of faith, hope, and love; utterly ignorant of an approach to God, and, worst of all, not caring to know him.

If you have the light you can give it in a tactful way, and trust God for the result, when you "so shine." To give is to be inwardly and abidingly blessed. "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 12

PAUL'S LAST WORDS

GOLDEN TEXT: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."—Phil. 1. 21.

SAINT PAUL'S THEORY OF LIFE

BY GEORGE H. KENNEDY

PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, OELWEIN, IOWA

THERE are many theories of life, many of them ignoble, most of them based on a false perspective. How many people there are, for example, whose whole purpose in life is the gratification of self. They exist to have a good time, to eat, drink, and be merry. With them the near-by and the immediate have the emphasis. "On with the dance, let joy be unconfin'd," is their cry. Pleasure is their god, self-indulgence their law of life. But Paul points to a more excellent way, to a saner, safer way, and it is Paul's putting of it that we are now considering.

I. *Paul's theory of life challenges attention*, and this by the very name it bears, as its author. The life of the apostle to the Gentiles was surcharged and yet multiple in efficiency; it was like an ocean liner loaded to the water's edge which wins the speed record as well as the record passenger capacity. In its universality Paul's fame equals that of most mortals; in its uniqueness it far surpasses that of the majority of earth's great men; and in its potentiality and prospects for continued and increasing eminence it far surpasses that of any famed for secular achievement. It used to be a mammoth task to secure a niche in the hall of fame; now it requires superlative effort to secure a niche in that corridor of the hall of fame where cob-webs and weeds do not bar the entrance soon after the

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mortar has set. How bright is the future for Paul's renown! Wherever Christianity takes root learning is sure to spring up and thrive. History will have its students and they will read the names of Paul's contemporaries; they will pronounce the names of the mighty men before and after him. But long before they spell these names preserved only on written scrolls they will have learned from human lips in fervid speech the name of the great apostle. A constantly increasing army of dauntless enthusiasts is covering the world, their single occupation being to publish on every continent a name from which Paul's name shall never be divorced. Christ and Paul are immortal names; they were not born to die. This is due to the fact that Paul found the essence of life in exalting Christ and he lived his creed.

Paul's name gives a presumptive value to his theory of life not only because of the fame his course of life brought him, but because the kind of life he lived brought him the ecstasy of life. We are prone to think of Paul as a great man, but not so often as a satisfied man. The fact is, Paul, as few others, knew the meaning of ecstasy and contentment. This idea is not written large on his phrasing of his theory. It would not be strange if men suspected Paul of preferring pain and peril to safety and comfort. He did say, "To depart and be with Christ is far better," and that he gloried in his infirmities. But Paul never courted pain and peril for their own sake or that thereby he might purchase privilege. He defied peril and pain to prevent him from accomplishing his life's purpose, and nothing of suffering or apprehension could move him or interfere with his finishing his course with joy. Paul's theory did not deluge him with afflictions, but it immersed him in gratification beyond his power or privilege of utterance. In no biography can more perfect contentment with his life choice be found than in that of Paul's. It still remains for Paul to have

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written the most ecstatic death-hour testimony of any one on record: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." We cannot slightly pass by Paul's theory, for it led him in triumph all the way and clear through unto the end. His experience is too rare and glorious to permit any thinking person to ignore it.

II. *Paul's theory of life challenges acceptance.* It is adequate to a great life. This theory makes the weak and trifling shudder, it is so consuming; but it makes the great heart glad. It is plain to all students of men that great workmen have been greatly dominated; there is nothing else before them. Since Christ for the joy that was set before him endured the cross and despised the shame, no one need expect to rule except he wear chains on his own arms. Paul's theory is a dominant one, and it thereby justifies its right to continue. It could not be adequate to a great life if it did not dominate.

Stop and consider the meaning of this. An undivided heart is required and indispensable to it. The soul makes election of a sovereign, one of unlimited jurisdiction. There must be no debating the metes and bounds of his authority; nothing may be withheld from the total domination of this ruler; whatever there is to rule he rules. This means not only absence of division, but also no check on duration. To live means every moment consecutively, no intermissions, no fluctuations, no flirtations with other rulers, no experimentings or proving of rival claims. Pain or peril, pleasure or profit, may vary, but singleness of heart and constancy of mind must know no ebb and flow, they must be invariable.

Paul's theory commands acceptance because it

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effectuates. What results attend its sway! The baser theories of life testify their worthlessness by their fruits. The curse of seeking gratification of physical pleasure is so evident that the blind and deaf can apprehend it unaided. Who hath woe, who hath sorrow, who hath contention, who hath babblings, who hath redness of eyes? Not only those who tarry long at the wine, but all those who tarry long in the chief employ of physical gratification. These persons are themselves perambulating transparencies advertising the emptiness of a sensual and sensuous theory of life. We admit that the higher theories of life develop useful, helpful, often lovable and beautiful persons. In contrast to the baser theories they far surpass them. It is a temptation to say to these better ones, "It is enough." But the Christian minister is set not for the preaching of the good, or the better, but the best. Saint Paul presents us with the best. In this day philanthropy, for example, has attained great and commendable proportions. Many are ready to adopt as their own the ideal of Abou Ben Adhem and say to the recording angel, "Write me as one who loves his fellow men." Who would attempt to belittle the splendor of such living! But is it adequate? Does it effectuate? Do not its results say or think, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty"? Is it thus the Christ stands? There was at one time enough difference between a good man and a Christian to cause the incarnation of the Son of God; has the importance of that difference suffered any considerable diminution so that we of this day may ignore it? Where is it so written? When the fullness of time was come that God sent forth his Son the world was not destitute, though it was not rich, of good men. The non-Christian faiths which we seek to evangelize to-day are not totally unacquainted with good men. The very foundation of our *credo* is that the world's superlative need is not men, high-minded, sun-crowned,

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living above the fog (though we fervently pray God may give us such), but the superlative need is Christian men. The substance of the point we would make is this: Saint Paul's alone of all the theories of living effectuates Christians, and Pauline Christians are benevolent, high-minded, loving, and lovable. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, Pauline Christians think on these things. These Christians, though they speak with the tongues of men and angels; though they have all faith, though they give their bodies to be burned and have not love, are nothing. They suffer long and are kind, they envy not, vaunt not, are not puffed up, do not behave unseemly, seek not their own, are not provoked, take no account of evil, rejoice with the truth; bear, believe, hope, endure all things; never fail.

In many places the church needs conversion to Paul's theory of living as sorely as the world needs it. Wherever churchmen have taken the place of Christians, there Paul's theory has been thrown down and must be rebuilt. One curse of the churches is the competition and discord of denominations; this is the result of the presence of churchmen for whom to live is the church, not for whom "to live is Christ." One curse of the several congregations is this same churchman; he lives to make his own church a power in his community, while he lives to endure or envy or hate every other church whether or no it exalts his Christ. What else but Paul's theory of life will save our congregations and denominations and the whole kingdom in the earth?

Paul's theory of life not only effectuates a Christian in the one who holds it, but it is the mightiest of all motives for multiplying Christians throughout the earth. We are all agreed that the earth must one day be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. It was the discovery by Paul that his bonds in

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Christ had fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel that led him to declare the sentiment of our text. There is no mightier agency possessing the human heart for propelling the gospel into the uttermost part of the earth than this transcendent conception of living—"To live is Christ." This is the mightiest propulsive power and it is also the mightiest power of reproduction. Wherever men are Spirit-driven to give this witness, there new Christians will be born.

The supreme task of this and every succeeding age will be multiplying Christians in the earth. In vain we disseminate pleasure among men. Who can stand the further multiplying of holidays and the lengthening of the hours of dissipation? What is "the pace that kills"? Paul died a violent death; was he worn out, burned out, nauseated, wearied in mind and soul? Men are calling for some one to

Minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart.

Is there anyone who can supply this ministry except he who holds Paul's theory of life? When the world shall be peopled with Christians, then this ministry to wrecked lives will be past. To relieve the suffering that prevails and to establish a new generation on the earth men must adopt Paul's theory and say, "To live is Christ."

His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below,
To cry, "Behold the Lamb!"

Such as employ themselves in this business will approach life's close, heart and hope full orbed; stepping with the firm tread of the conqueror, reminiscent with bright eye, anticipating with smiling face, retrospect pleasing, prospect exhilarating.

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 19

LIFE A TRUST, A JOURNEY, A BATTLE

GOLDEN TEXT: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—2 Tim. 4. 7.

BY WALLACE MAC MULLEN, D.D.

PASTOR MADISON AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
NEW YORK CITY

THIS is a bit from Paul's valedictory if the received chronology of the epistles be accurate. And it marks not merely a terminal point, but the most splendid "commencement" of the apostle's career. The crown awaits his triumphant spirit; he is about to enter upon a life royal in its quality and power. The triple assertion furnishes us with three themes, each one of immense significance, and a brief consideration of such a trinity of truths can attempt no more than a few hints at their meanings. These themes are: Life as a Battle, Life as a Journey, Truth as a Trust.

1. *Life as a Battle.* "I have fought the good fight." These strong words of this imprisoned warrior stir our pulses like the bugle notes which stir an army to action. Is life a game? Huxley thought so and conceived of our opponent as some strong angel, perfect in skill, flawless in justice, devoid of pity, playing life's game strictly according to its rules, without haste and without rest, taking no advantage and granting no favors. And Omar, the Persian, subscribed to that view of life. The great unseen player, despot as well as expert, moves us as he will

Upon his checkerboard of nights and days,
Hither and thither moves and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

Life a game? No, answers Paul. Life is more. Something more than personal gain or personal loss is to be its outcome.

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Life is a battle. And we struggle not *against* our Conqueror, but with him for the overthrow of all forces arrayed against him. It is clear at once that Paul is no egotist when he speaks in this confident, ringing way. He does not say, "I have fought a good fight," but "*the* good fight." He is not boasting of his qualities as a fighter, but rather speaking as a soldier who has never deserted the ranks but been true to a cause. He lays claim to the loyalty which Professor Royce, of Harvard, has recently declared to be central in character and vital in service. It was a contest thrust upon him when the glory blazed around him and blinded him on the Damascus road. And from the moment of that surrender until these last days in the Mamertine dungeon he had neither shirked nor strutted. Some of the fields of battle were in his soul and some were in the world, but the foe under all its Protean forms was the same. It was sin. This is the contest to which all are summoned. Sloth, Deceit, Pride, Selfishness and other enemies forever threaten us. There are multitudes who refuse the fight, who haul down the soul's colors without the striking of a blow; there are many who make a truce with their sworn foes, contented with error and indulgence rather than eager for truth and righteousness; but if we lay claim to any soldierly qualities, if the prospect of triumph inspires us more than the offer of inglorious ease, if the banners of our manhood are to float proudly in the breezes of the heights above us rather than be dishonored and trampled in the dust beneath us, then *we* must fight. To turn indifferently from the evil which seeks to ravage the fair territories of all souls is to build the walls of an eternal prison, to forge the "bars that keep us from the splendid stars." No fight is so fundamentally important as "*the good* fight." Social problems, political problems, problems of physical healing and of mental development are all complicated and made almost insoluble by sin. No fight can be so splendid in ultimate results. The con-

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quest of man over man or of man over matter cannot compare with the triumph of man over sin.

It is a fierce warfare. Much of it is defensive. The whole armor of God is needed that we may be able to stand. There is of necessity a good deal of fighting within the intrenchments. The enemy must be closely watched and steadily repulsed. Yet an aggressive warfare is wise and it wins. Our battles are not to be all Gettysburgs, with the repulse of daring invaders, however successful such repulse may be. Some are to be like Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, and the impregnable strongholds of the enemy to be carried in a whirlwind of irresistible enthusiasm. Too often we live in our personal struggles and in our church activity as though we were in a state of siege. The single soul has its needs met not by a timid protest and resistance to sin's encroachments, but by a radical consecration to absolute righteousness. And the church needs a righteousness which is militant as well as regnant. Out in the mission fields where exciting history is making every day, medical service, educational work, thorough presentation of Christian ethics, strong defenses of Christian theology are all useful, indispensable, but no amount of use of these treasures of our Christian civilization, however wise the use may be, must be permitted to take the place belonging to evangelism. At home, where we have as leader a governor with an indomitable conscience and the church stirs herself, even the strongly intrenched, money-buttressed gamblers can be fought to a finish. The "tidal wave" of temperance now blessing our land with its cleansing floods has many a contributing element, but the main cause is a moving church. Always, if the church is to win in the warfare for God, she must plan no masterly retreats, nor be content with defending fortresses, but take the field. If we could all feel anew the irresistible impulse of a great spiritual passion, and blaze again with evangelistic fire, many a

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sin personal and social would go down in defeat and the ultimate victory of God be greatly hastened.

2. *Life as a Journey.* "I have finished *the course.*" Christians were early called those of "the way." It is a word which may be interpreted as a method of life or as a journey. Jesus pointed out the route, walked it, ordered it, led them into it, gave them the joy of his company, and then vanished out of their sight. But the impulse which he had given them for the journey did not die. The Spirit came, promise of the Master, power of life. The way proved stony, dangerous, wearisome, deadly. High priests issued edicts against the pilgrims, religious zealots hunted them, bound them with cords, stripped them of their goods, scattered their leaders. Their assemblies became secret, their employments ceased, their poverty crippled them, they were hungry and needed alms from distant friends. Later they were lied about, sneered at, charged with monstrous crimes, scourged, flayed, banished, burned, butchered, while holiday crowds feasted their eyes on their dying agonies. Their own deluded countrymen joined with heartless pagans to drive them out of "the way." But they trudged on and sang and loved God and men and died with a cheer. It needed a mighty impulse to bring such patience and such power. The Spirit did it. He came to them, not only to Paul, enabling him to finish the course, but to all of them. There were no favorites of the Spirit. The kingdom through whose territories "the way" runs is not an aristocracy. To all the Spirit came. To some he brought vision and prophecy, gifts of speech and teaching and administration and government and healing. But to those not called to leadership, to exalted service, the Spirit came also and gave light to the face and vigor to the step and courage to the heart. A spiritual impulse, persistent, perennial, mighty, to help us smile at the dangers of the way, is our first need if we would finish "the course." There are some who face

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poverty and pain every day and neither whine nor whimper. And some there are who, though they live among the luxuries of life, yet see material things wasting the souls of loved ones, and some are stabbed to the heart by children they have lived for, and their hearts ache, and some have parted with those in whom they had refuge and rapture and they are lonely, and yet they all walk on with quiet bravery and the sun is on their faces and they bless other lives. Spiritual power is needed for such triumphs. There is historical continuity in the Spirit's impulse in the church of Christ, yet some discouraged students of contemporary conditions have said the Spirit has gone from the church. Such a statement is false to the facts of history, and heresy against the truth of the covenant of God. The Spirit never deserts us. Travelers in the "way" of Christ can be sure of his unfailing inspiration. The spiritual apathy which has seemed to be resting like a pall upon the church, making religious exercises irksome because unreal, is lifting and soon as often before God will

Glow above, with scarce an intervention,
Pressing close and palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours.

And life as a journey suggests not only the need of an impulse but the fact of movement. Disciples of Jesus should be busy. He went about doing good, not occasionally but always. Splendid saving activity was not a spasm with him. It was a law. Christianity does not put a man asleep. It has no alliance with laziness and no affinity for it. Do something in the "way" for those who walk it with you; for those who are on its edges and need your invitation to enter it; for those who are stumbling in trackless fields and do not even know of its safety and glory.

And life as a journey suggests direction and a goal. "The course" is straight. There is nothing aimless in the movements of those who walk it. The glory of the

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“way” is progressive. The important question is not, “Do we know all its secrets?” but, “Are we on it?” Our direction will determine our goal. Such a way can have but one goal. It must issue in God, just as in the olden days every Roman road ran straight to the heart of the Eternal City. There is much in that word of the Master, “I am the way.” To think that such a way loses itself in the mists of the future, drops into nothingness, is to forget the nature of the way, the materials of its construction, the reason for its making. Beyond all peradventure such a way leads to Father, home, heaven, the crown and the established glory of the spiritual victor.

3. *Truth as a Trust.* Only a word is allowed us here. “The faith” was not invented. It was “delivered.” Said Cousin, “Man may have said ‘my creed’; give him credit for never having said ‘my truth.’” All truth is God’s. Man may discover it or receive it, but God gives it. *The truth of which Paul counted himself a guardian was God’s special gift.* “The truth as it is in Jesus” is unique, superhuman. It has been “once for all delivered unto the *saints*.” Character and consecration are the guarantees of success in the search for the truth of God. And to the saints is committed the task of keeping the truth treasure with which they are entrusted. The true way to “keep” the faith is not to chain it, not to imprison it within “systems,” but to fearlessly, reverently investigate it and to radiantly illustrate it. The duty which confronts every disciple is to “adorn the doctrine.” Paul was preëminent in his intellectual defense and exposition of the faith, but beneath all his speech, to give it power, was his vital experience of the faith’s meanings and values. To be able at last to say “I have kept the faith” we must let it rule us.

—Life a trust, a journey, a battle. May God make us incorruptible guardians, athletes, heroes!

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 26

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

GOLDEN TEXT: "And thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."—Matt. 1. 21.

THE ETERNAL MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

By WILLIAM INGRAHAM HAVEN, D.D.

SECRETARY OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY, NEW YORK CITY

THERE is a vast difference between the eternal meaning of a thing and the immediate and perhaps the most conspicuous associations connected with it. You see a river covered with gayly-covered canoes, a summer scene full of life and action, and you might say this was the purpose of the river to furnish a surface for such a pageant. But this gives no explanation of the ceaseless flow of the unwearying stream, gathering its life from the clouds and cutting its way through besetting difficulties to the great deep. You stand upon the shores of the ocean and look on assembled multitudes refreshing themselves in the glorious surf, or you lift up your eyes to the white-winged vessels that like birds move over the great blue waves, and you say this is the secret of the ocean, but you are far from the meaning of the eternal moan and surge or the life and tossing of the sea.

So is it with this Christmas season, with its gayety, its hurrying throngs bent on pleasure-seeking and pleasure-giving, its carols and services. Are these the eternal meaning of Christmas? O no. One must get far back into deeper things to feel the meaning of Christmas. And if we could get this a great peace would come into our hearts which all this busy celebration not only fails to bring but often actually hinders and prevents. What is this eternal meaning of Christmas?

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These twelve verses of Saint Matthew's Gospel and the Golden Text, which is another verse of the same Gospel, give us the exceedingly dramatic surroundings of the first Christmas. And in these surroundings there are presented both a clue and a statement that will answer our question. Let us first follow the clue.

1. *The Ancient Prophet.* Among the many picturesque features of the visit of the wise men to Herod, as narrated in the Scripture lesson, none is more striking than the searching of the old records and the finding and bringing to Herod of the utterance of the prophet Micah, whose word of prophecy was then over seven hundred years old. This ancient prophet not only gives the clue to the place of the birth of the Christ in nearby Bethlehem, but also to its essential meaning. It is well to become acquainted with this man to whom God revealed something of his secret purposes. He lived in one of the most exalted periods of the history of the chosen people. He saw the degradation and corruption of the days of Jotham and Ahaz and the revival and exaltation of the reign of Hezekiah, one of the most princely of the kings of Judah. His prophecy is throughout a Christmas prophecy. And what is that, do you ask? It is a prophecy of the redemption and spiritual uplift of a people through a Person, given of God, who shall "feed his flock in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God."

Three themes make up this Christmas prophecy: the wretchedness of a people who have given themselves over to evil; the completeness of the restoration, social and spiritual; and the efficacy of the redeeming Saviour.

No brilliant student of the real conditions of an empire ever pointed out its weakness and shame more pungently than Micah the rottenness of the reigns of Ahaz and Jotham. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your resting place; because of uncleanness that destroyeth, even with a grievous destruction," is his

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message. And it is the same old story of covetousness and cruelty: "They covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." "Ye who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron." It is like a picture of modern Persia, where a population of forty or fifty millions has been reduced to less than ten millions by internal dissensions and moral decay.

And yet to this people he promises deliverance, and a deliverance as complete as any modern lover of social perfection could dream. In eloquent words he describes the God of Israel as a God "that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage, . . . because he delighteth in loving-kindness." And in this deliverance are new conditions, even those of universal peace; for it is this prophet that declares for disarmament in the words we have not yet seen fulfilled: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." And this peace is not a peace of indifference but of law, for "out of Zion shall go forth the law." And it leads to as perfect a social picture as one could ask—"every man under his vine and under his fig tree" without fear, "for all the peoples walk every one in the name of his god; and we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and ever." And I must go a step further, for it is this prophet that in that ancient day foresees and foretells the fact that social betterment rests on true spiritual perceptions. He decrys utterly the ritual of offerings and sacrifices and declares the essential "requirement," as Whittier has phrased it, to be, "to do justly,

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and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God."

There is just one more vital characteristic of this prophet's word. He sees a redeemed humanity, but he sees that it is wrought out by no evolutionary process, working by itself in a festering humanity, but by a Saviour appointed—a chosen shepherd—a ruler who shall come forth "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." "And this man shall be our peace."

So here, following the clue of this ancient prophet, we get at the eternal meaning of Christmas, which is nothing less than the coming forth of the One who shall restore a perfected, spiritual society, redeeming us from evil. "He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness"; "for it is he that shall save his people from their sins."

2. *The Immediate Surroundings.* Two or three groups stand out in the assembling of events about the birth of Christ; the Holy Family; the seekers, noble, of high spirit and desire; and Herod and all Jerusalem with him. And the effect of this first Christmas upon these varying groups gives us a further clue to its eternal meaning. As the drop of a reagent in a clouded liquid will change it in an instant, separating a dark sediment and leaving a clear liquid above it, so this wondrous birth immediately revealed the hearts of men, separating the evil from the good. Herod and all Jerusalem were "troubled"; the wise men "rejoiced with exceeding great joy." As it was then, so has it ever been, so will it ever be. The day of Christ is a day of darkness as well as of dawning. I know nothing of what the future may bring, of what wondrous mercies God may work out in his marvels of redemption. I may hope that not only the remnant will be saved, but the great mass in some way transfused and transformed by the power of his immeasurable love. But whatever I hope, I must not deceive myself or others or vary a hair's breadth from the awful truth of this eternal

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meaning of Christmas, that doom and darkness are as essential to it as joy and light. Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled. It meant the end, the awful end. Who ever perished more miserably than Herod? What city ever was overthrown with more fearful overthrow than Jerusalem? We are deceiving ourselves nowadays, too many of us, and forgetting the unspeakable perils of sin, social and personal sin, for both have their visitation here. Jerusalem, reeking with tyranny, is razed to the ground; Herod, rotten with vice, suffers nameless agonies. Christmas is the great revealer.

But let us turn to the other groups who stand forth luminous against this darkness—the wise men, whose hearts have long loved the good, who have searched for the good One, traversed tedious deserts seeking him, inquired of all who could help them and rejoiced with exceeding joy when his star again appeared, and knelt in holy worship, laying their gifts at his feet, when they saw their heart's desire. There were other seekers. How they all stand forth drawn by this magnet! —Simeon and Anna, Matthew, Peter, John, the Marys, the “five hundred”—not the “Four Hundred,” you will notice—and Paul, of whom you have been studying, all lovers of the light. And how radiant they all become as this new light shines upon them! It is more than a social betterment that this Christmas brings, it is a joyous, transforming, satisfying, personal, eternal illumination. Who can think of the wise men as ever walking in the darkness again after they have seen the light of his face! Who can think of them as anything but light-bearers, irradiating every pathway of their after life! “While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.”

3. *The Statement.* All this that we have followed as a clue is clearly stated in that dream message of the angel to Joseph: “And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.” What I have been trying to say has been well said by

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the great English preacher Liddon: "We must pray for a new and quickened sense of the need which man, lost in the mazes of sin and error, has of a Redeemer to teach and to save him." The eternal meaning of Christmas is only revealed to those who see the sins of the world: not the misfortune, the sorrow, the misery, the imperfect, the undeveloped—all this is apparent enough—but, as we repeat in our communion ritual, "the sins of the world." Then to those there stands forth the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," and the heart can sing,

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

This is the great Christmas message and its eternal message:

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

